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ARMED FORCES

STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL ART AT STALINGRAD

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 82 (signed to press 25 Oct 82) pp 9-16

[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Army Gen M. Kozlov, chief of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff Military Academy: "Development of Strategy and Operational Art"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] The victory of the Soviet Armed Forces at Stalingrad made a decisive contribution toward achieving a radical turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War and of World War II as a whole, and created favorable conditions for a Soviet Army general strategic offensive and ejection of the fascist invaders en masse from occupied Soviet territory. The strategic initiative went over once and for all into the hands of the Soviet Supreme High Command. The defeat in detail of enemy forces on the Volga and Don helped strengthen the antifascist coalition, promoted more aggressive operations by the Anglo-American armies, and strengthening of the Resistance Movement in the European countries. This was a truly outstanding victory, which embodied the great military and labor exploits of our people, guided and directed by the Communist Party. Fighting a powerful adversary, Soviet servicemen demonstrated the greatest staunchness and courage in repelling superior enemy forces and an unbending will for victory over the enemy in offensive operations. In a classic operation to encircle and totally destroy the largest enemy force grouping in the history of warfare, with an overall equality of forces, the Soviet Army demonstrated a high degree of military skill and clear superiority over the Wehrmacht's art of warfare. The valuable experience in preparing for and conducting defensive and offensive operations in the course of the Battle of Stalingrad exerted great influence on development of the Soviet art of warfare and was extensively utilized in the subsequent armed struggle. It has retained its relevance to military science up to the present day.

* * *

The Battle of Stalingrad was an aggregate of defensive and offensive operations which were unique in concept and execution, which enriched Soviet art of warfare with new, diversified experience in innovative solving of the main problems of strategy and operational art. It became a genuine school of leading large masses of troops, a school of combat expertise for commanders and staffs.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY in the Battle of Stalingrad proceeded in the direction of improving the methods and forms of preparation for and conduct of strategic defense and the strategic offensive, establishment and employment of strategic reserves, as well as improvement of the organizational structure of the Armed Forces and their guidance in conformity with change in the material and technological foundation and conditions of warfare.

The Battle of Stalingrad began in conditions which were extremely unfavorable for us. The German-fascist army, exploiting its superiority in forces in the southwestern sector, broke through the Soviet front in a 170 kilometer zone and, seizing the strategic initiative, swiftly exploited offensively in the direction of the Caucasus and Stalingrad, advancing with powerful battle groups. The enemy's arrival at the Volga near Stalingrad threatened to split the strategic front.

In this situation the Soviet command authorities were first of all compelled to organize in the southern part of the Soviet-German front a defense which would be capable of halting the enemy's advance, of battering the enemy's battle groups, and of creating favorable conditions for the Soviet forces to shift to a counteroffensive.

In two strategic defensive operations (one on the far and close-in approaches to Stalingrad and another within the city and south of it), fought from 17 July to 18 November 1942, the Soviet command authorities resolved more successfully than in 1941 the problem of maintaining the stability and integrity of the strategic front. This was achieved by Hq SHC [Headquarters, Supreme High Command] promptly moving up and deploying its reserves in the threatened sectors. Restoring the fighting efficiency of the large strategic formations in the field by assigning to them individual combined units and units of the SHC Reserve, Hq SHC devoted principal attention to establishment of new fronts by moving up reserve armies. The Voronezh Front, for example, was formed on 9 June (Lt Gen F. I. Golikov, commanding; effective 14 July -- Lt Gen N. F. Vatutin, commanding), the Stalingrad Front on 12 July (MSU S. K. Timoshenko, commanding; effective 23 July -- Lt Gen V. N. Gordov, and effective 13 August -- Col Gen A. I. Yeremenko). The Southeastern Front was established at the beginning of August for this same purpose (Col Gen A. I. Yeremenko, commanding),¹ and in October -- the Southwestern Front (Lt Gen N. F. Vatutin, commanding).² They all united the troops defending in the Stalingrad strategic sector. At the same time new strategic reserves were formed and moved into this sector.³

Establishment of a deeply disposed defense in the Stalingrad sector helped stabilize the front. At the end of June and beginning of July construction of three Stalingrad defensive perimeters, which had been begun in the fall of 1941, was resumed in the area between the Volga and the Don. On 15 July the decision was made to construct a fourth (urban) perimeter. All this made it possible to organize an aggressive defense in sequentially occupied positions, to beef up forces in the most important sectors, to replace casualties, to stabilize the front, and to form battle groups to shift to a counteroffensive.

In the course of the defensive battles Hq SHC, in order to lessen enemy pressure on Stalingrad and to deceive the fascist command authorities regarding the

Soviet main attack which was in the preparation stages, organized a number of offensive operations in other sectors of the Soviet-German front.⁴ The enemy reserves in those sectors were immobilized and could not be redeployed to Stalingrad. Offensive operations in other sectors were also conducted during the counteroffensive, for the same purpose.⁵ Thus the problem of strategic coordination was also successfully resolved. The experience of and lessons from the defensive operations were taken into account during organization for and conduct of the strategic defense in the Battle of Kursk.

The most valuable contribution to development of the art of warfare was made by the counteroffensive (19 November 1942-2 February 1943), the experience of which was most extensively utilized in many subsequent strategic offensive operations. In contrast to the Battle of Moscow, preparations for the counteroffensive were of comparatively brief duration, carried out during extremely heavy defensive fighting, and planning was in greater detail and more comprehensive. The counteroffensive began with relatively equal numerical strength and numbers of combat aircraft between the two sides, but with Soviet forces enjoying a 50 percent superiority in artillery and a 100 percent superiority in tanks and self-propelled guns. This ensured the establishment of powerful battle groups capable of implementing the plans of the Soviet command authorities.

In preparing for and conducting the counteroffensive at Stalingrad, the Soviet Supreme High Command displayed a high degree of skill in selecting the main axes of advance and the time for launching the main attacks, in forming offensive force groupings (battle groups), in achieving the element of surprise, in establishing and utilizing strategic reserves, in organizing teamwork and coordination, and in troop command and control.

As early as September 1942 Hq SHC reached the conclusion that the German-fascist main forces and reserves in the southwestern sector were enmeshed in an exhausting, hopeless struggle along a narrow stretch of front in the Stalingrad area. It was becoming obvious that in these conditions the fascist command authorities would be unable to mount large-scale offensive operations in the northwestern and western sectors in coming months, and this would enable the Soviet command authorities purposefully to utilize their strategic reserves to defeat in detail the main enemy force grouping in the southwestern sector. In view of this situation, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), the State Defense Committee and Hq SHC decided to consider the forthcoming operation in the Stalingrad area the principal activity up to the end of 1942.

The choice of time to shift from the defense to a decisive counteroffensive at Stalingrad was determined first and foremost by the endeavor on the part of the Soviet command authorities to take the enemy unawares. Such a moment came when the adversary, having exhausted his offensive capabilities, was shifting to a strategic defense but had not yet been able to establish defensive force groupings and to move up the necessary reserves to parry our attacks, as well as to reinforce his flanks, which were being defended by Romanian troops, which were militarily weaker and in poor morale.

We must give due credit to the skill of Hq SHC and the General Staff, who carried out in the course of highly intense defensive battles an aggregate of purposeful measures aimed at establishing powerful battle groups and achieving the element of strategic and operational surprise with a counteroffensive. As a result they succeeded in keeping secret the plan of the strategic operation, the time and place of the attacks, redeployment of forces, and concentration of reserves.

The initial version of the plan of the forthcoming operation was maintained in the strictest secrecy, and nobody knew about it apart from I. V. Stalin, his deputy G. K. Zhukov, and the Chief of the General Staff A. M. Vasilevskiy. Subsequently the number of persons involved in planning the operation, although increasing in numbers, chiefly by including the commanding generals of the branches of service, combat arms and command authorities of the large strategic formations, on the whole was nevertheless quite limited.

Plans were prepared and preparations made for the front offensive operations while observing the strictest security measures. All correspondence, even in code, as well as telephone traffic pertaining to the forthcoming operation were absolutely prohibited. All instructions were given only orally, and only to the immediate executing personnel. In particular, the commanding generals of the fronts issued orders for the forthcoming operation personally to the army commanders involved, marked on a map. Troop redeployments within fronts as well as all movements of units and combined units in the combat zone were accomplished at night and made to look like moves to reinforce the defense.

One of the measures pertaining to strategic concealment, camouflage and deception in connection with the forthcoming offensive was the communication to all fronts in mid-October of a cleartext Hq SHC directive⁶ dealing with preparation for defense, figuring that the contents of the directive would be intercepted by the adversary. In order to deceive the Hitlerite command authorities regarding our actual plans for the winter of 1942/43, Hq SHC endeavored to give the adversary the impression that it was preparing for a major offensive in the western sector. This aim was fostered by conducting partial offensive operations by Soviet forces in the Velikiye Luki, Rzhev, Sychevka, and Zhizdra areas. Forming of strategic reserves in areas east of Moscow (their southern boundary ran along a line Tambov-Balashov) also suggested to enemy command authorities the possibility of a Soviet offensive against Army Group Center.

By skillfully concealing and camouflaging all preparatory measures, the Soviet command authorities deceived the enemy almost right up to the launching of the counteroffensive. Gen A. Jodl, former chief of the Operations Staff of Hitler's OKW, stated the following during an interrogation on 18 June 1945: "We had absolutely no idea of the strength of the Russian forces in that area. Previously there had been nothing there, and suddenly an attack of great force was launched, which was of decisive significance...."⁷

The counteroffensive at Stalingrad was the first time in the Great Patriotic War of an advance-planned offensive operation by a group of fronts working in cooperation to encircle and totally destroy the largest enemy force grouping in

the history of warfare, with overall equal forces between the opposing sides. The Soviet art of warfare became enriched by the experience of simultaneous establishment of an inner and outer perimeter of envelopment and distribution of personnel and weapons between them. The bulk of the forces were moved to the inner perimeter of envelopment, particularly the armored troops of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts, while smaller forces were assigned to the outer perimeter, chiefly rifle troops, which were to repel attempts by the enemy to break the surrounded troops out of encirclement before they were defeated in detail.

Unquestionably the logic of combat required and the plan called for encircling and routing the surrounded enemy as a single, unified process. A miscalculation, however, in determining the numerical strength of the encircled enemy forces made it necessary to amend the original plan. This was dictated by the fact that the 330,000-man enemy force, which totaled 22 divisions, although encircled, had not lost its organizational integrity and aggressiveness, and kept the main forces of three Soviet fronts engaged. The total length of the battle line (interior and exterior) was almost double the original extent, sharply reducing overall operational density. In addition, the enemy was hastily gathering forces at the exterior front in order to attack and break the surrounded force out of encirclement. Under the circumstances the Soviet command authorities acknowledged the advisability initially to defeat the enemy on the outer front, and subsequently to mount a carefully prepared operation to destroy the encircled enemy force. In conditions where the outer and inner perimeters of encirclement were being established by the efforts of several front large strategic formations, Hq SHC made the practical decision to assign command and control of all troops involved in wiping out the encircled force to the commanding general of one of the fronts, to wit the Don Front, concentrating its entire attention exclusively on accomplishing this mission. At this time the command authorities of the other fronts were concentrating all their efforts on performing missions on the outer perimeter of encirclement.

In the Kotel'nikovo and Middle Don operations, conducted in December, experience was obtained in fighting on an outer perimeter of envelopment, and in particular: repelling with limited forces a powerful counterthrusting enemy tank force; shift to the defense without a pause to deploy, as was done by the combined units of Lt Gen R. Ya. Malinovskiy's 2nd Guards Army, transferred from the Hq SHC Reserve; encirclement and swift annihilation of an enemy force; attack into the flank and rear of defending enemy troops in combination with frontal attacks; raid-type actions by tank combined units.

In Operation "Kol'tso" [Ring], conducted from 10 January to 2 February 1943, comprehensive experience was obtained in organizing for and executing total annihilation of an encircled enemy force, as well as effectively sealing off such a force from the air, which promoted the success of the operation as a whole. We should stress here that not defense but the most determined offensive actions turned out to be necessary on the outer perimeter of envelopment, in order to push the enemy back as far as possible and to deprive him of the opportunity to break through to the encircled force.

At Stalingrad representatives of Hq SHC firmly established themselves once and for all as an important and necessary element of strategic leadership. They gave practical assistance on the spot to the command authorities of the fronts in preparing for the offensive, in organizing teamwork and cooperation, and in logistic support of the operation. Through them the Supreme High Command could when necessary promptly amend decisions and influence the course of military operations. A new element in the system of strategic leadership of the Armed Forces was establishment at the end of August 1942 of the position of Deputy Supreme Commander. Army Gen G. K. Zhukov was named to this position.

OPERATIONAL ART was developing in the direction of improvement in the modes and forms of organization and conduct of front and army defensive and offensive operations.

Operational defense at Stalingrad was distinguished by greater stability and aggressiveness in comparison with 1941.

Stability of operational defense was characterized by a greater depth of fortified defensive zones and positions, up to 120 kilometers, which made it possible sequentially to repulse attacks by the advancing enemy. Establishment of stronger reserves in the fronts, and establishment in the armies of support echelons and reserves disposed to considerable depth (up to 120 km in the front and up to 50 km in the army), made it possible not only to reinforce the troops of the forward echelons of the large strategic formations but also to mount more powerful front and army counterthrusts and increased capabilities to mount partial offensive operations. It was precisely these which gave the operational defense at Stalingrad a high degree of aggressiveness and began playing an important role in thwarting the plans of the fascist command authorities. This was fostered by the fact that armored troops (composite tank armies, tank and mechanized corps), possessing a high degree of mobility, were utilized more extensively in counterthrusting forces than in the past, and air forces were also employed in massive strikes on the enemy force groupings.

In the course of the strategic defensive operations in the Stalingrad sector, Soviet forces mounted a number of front counterthrusts and more than 10 army counterthrusts which, although not always highly successful, nevertheless forced the adversary temporarily to shift from the offense to the defense, to regroup his forces and to seek accomplishment of missions on other axes, losing time. At that time it was important for us to slow the enemy's rate of advance at all costs and to lessen his offensive drive and force of attack. And this was achieved. Prior to 17 July the adversary was advancing at a rate of up to 30 km per day, while on 17-22 July the pace had dropped to not more than 12-15 km. Subsequently his rate of advance dropped off day by day, and on the average was one fourth that achieved in the western sector in 1941.

The counterthrust by the Stalingrad Front, launched by the forces of the 1st and 4th Tank armies at the end of July, was indicative; the enemy, who had broken through toward the Don, was attempting to encircle the forces of the 62nd and 64th armies and to execute a hasty river-crossing operation. As a result of this counterthrust the enemy force was drawn into extended fighting

and, failing to accomplish his objective, was forced to shift to the defense prior to the arrival of new forces.

The partial offensive operations mounted in August on the Don northwest of Stalingrad with the forces of the 63rd and 21st armies, with the objective of seizing and holding bridgeheads, and at the end of September in the Sarpinskiye Lakes area south of Stalingrad by part of the forces of the 57th and 51st armies, in order to improve the operational situation and to move troops from the defile between the lakes, were successful. The existence of bridgeheads on the flanks of the main enemy force grouping created favorable conditions for deploying our battle groups there and their subsequent shift to a counteroffensive.

Of considerable interest from the standpoint of the art of warfare are actions along a broad front by forward detachments of the 62nd Army, which had advanced to the Chir River, which was 40-60 km from the forward edge of the battle area. The first to be hit by the superior forces of the German 6th Army, from 17 through 22 July they held the enemy on sequentially occupied defensive lines. As a result the adversary was forced to deploy his troops prematurely and to engage in stubborn fighting, sustaining considerable casualties even before reaching our main defensive zone. Such an adverse beginning to the offensive forced the Hitlerite command authorities to make the decision on 23 July to reinforce the 6th Army with 10 divisions (including 5 panzer and motorized divisions), and on 31 July, when savage fighting erupted with the Soviet main forces, to turn the 4th Panzer Army from the Caucasian to the Stalingrad axis.

Fortifications also were improved in the course of the defensive battles. At the end of the defensive period fortifications on the Stalingrad Front (in the zones of the 64th and 57th armies) included the following: a main (3-5 km deep) and second (at a distance of 12-15 km from the FEBA) defensive zones; areas defended by army reserves at a distance of 15-20 km; areas occupied by front reserves, at a depth of 40-50 km, and the front defensive line -- at 75-150 km. The defensive areas, especially in the tactical zone, began to be fortified on a more extensive scale with a system of fighting and communication trenches. Thus there was clearly evident a trend toward a decisive shift from a center of resistance type defense to a static defense.

The offensive operations at Stalingrad were distinguished by skilled forming of battle groups through bold concentration of maximum possible manpower and weapons on the fronts' main axes of advance and weakening of secondary axes. As a result of this powerful battle groups were formed and a decisive superiority over the enemy was achieved in the breakthrough sectors. But in connection with the fact that the depth of the front operations was not substantial (60-140 km), the forces of the fronts were formed up in a single echelon.

There was manifested in organization and execution of offensive operations a tendency toward narrowing the zones of advance of the armies operating on the front's main axis of advance, to 35 km in the November operation and to 12 km in Operation "Ring." In connection with the forming of strong offensive exploitation echelons of tank and mechanized corps and the availability of reserves, the depth of the armies' tactical order of battle was increasing.

All this ensured a powerful initial attack, a rapid pace of penetration of the enemy's tactical zone of defense, swift exploitation of tactical into operational success, and made it possible to solve the problem of swift penetration of the entire operational zone and completion of encirclement of the enemy.

At Stalingrad Soviet forces employed a new method of breaking through the enemy's defense, by simultaneously launching massive attacks on several (seven) axes. Each of the three fronts sought to penetrate a defense in two or three sectors, the intervals between which ranged from 15 to 20 km, which made it possible already on the first two days of the operation to establish tactical coordination between adjacent battle groups, to unite their efforts in a single powerful drive, and swiftly to widen the breakthrough frontage. With this organization of penetration, the adversary split up the efforts of his tactical and operational reserves among many axes. In addition, it was more difficult for him to guess our actual axes of advance.

Full artillery support was provided during the operation, while when mopping up the encircled enemy force the method of a single rolling barrage, which subsequently was extensively utilized, was employed for the first time on an operational scale to support an infantry and tank assault; first experience was obtained in artillery and air support of engagement into a breach and support of the actions of mobile combined units.

Soviet aviation, having gained operational air superiority, for the first time in the war successfully executed, working in coordination with antiaircraft artillery, an aerial blockade of an encircled enemy force. Air actions assumed the form of an air offensive; air support of tank and mechanized corps began to be executed on the basis of close coordination between air and tanks at operational depth.

The counteroffensive at Stalingrad represented a major contribution toward evolution of the forms and modes of employment of large combined units of armored troops as mobile task forces of combined-arms armies operating on the main axes of advance.

Experience in accomplishing coordination with the Volga Naval Flotilla, which was operationally subordinate to the Stalingrad Front, was obtained in the Battle of Stalingrad.

Another characteristic feature was the fact that reconnaissance in force, conducted prior to the offensive (2-7 days in advance) by the forces of forward battalions, beginning at Stalingrad, was becoming a rule, was going beyond the tactical level and taking on operational significance.

THE ROLE OF HEADQUARTERS STAFFS IN TROOP COMMAND AND CONTROL BECAME ENHANCED, AND TROOP CONTROL IMPROVED. The assignment of personal radio sets to the commanding generals of fronts and armies was introduced. An extensive network of command posts (CP) and observation posts (OP), as close as possible to the advancing troops, was set up in advance for the first time on such an extensive scale. The commanding general of a front had an OP in addition to his CP, while the commanding general of an army had 1-2 OP, as well as auxiliary command and control facilities with a command group led by one of his deputies.

* * *

On the whole Soviet art of warfare in the Battle of Stalingrad became enriched with many new points and rose to a new and higher level in its development.

The unprecedented defensive battles fought by the Soviet forces at Stalingrad serve as a vivid example of the tenacity and courage with which one must defend the socialist homeland and Communist ideals. The staunchness of morale, the high degree of military skill and the combat expertise of the Soviet servicemen constituted the main factors in achieving victory in both defense and offense.

Victory is the main criterion in assessing art of warfare, and this victory was impressive. The enemy was defeated. The Soviet Armed Forces once again seized the strategic initiative and made an enormous contribution toward reaching a radical turning point in the Great Patriotic War. "Not only were Hitler's elite troops smashed in this battle," stressed CPSU Central Committee General Secretary Comrade L. I. Brezhnev. "The offensive momentum of fascism ground to a halt here, and the morale of fascism was smashed."⁸

This was a historic exploit, which reflected the leadership role of the Communist Party and the vital strength of our societal and governmental system, Communist ideology, and the superiority of the socialist economy and Soviet art of warfare.

FOOTNOTES

1. The troops of the left side of the Stalingrad Front formed its nucleus.
2. On 30 September these fronts were redesignated the Don and Stalingrad fronts respectively.
3. A total of 55 rifle divisions, 7 tank corps, 9 rifle and 30 tank brigades, and a large number of replacement troops were sent into this area just between 23 July and 1 October ("Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 5, Voyenizdat, 1975, page 194), and in October-November -- 25 rifle and 9 cavalry divisions, 6 tank and mechanized corps, and a large number of artillery units (Ibid., Vol 6, 1976, page 33).
4. 30 July-23 August 1942 -- the Rzhev-Sychevka Operation of the Kalinin and Western fronts; 19 August-10 October 1942 -- the Sinyavino Operation of the Leningrad and Volkov fronts, as well as offensive operations of the Voronezh and Bryansk fronts in the Voronezh area.
5. 24 November 1942-20 January 1943 -- the Velikiye Luki Operation of the Kalinin Front; 1 January-18 February 1943 -- the Rostov Operation of the Southern Front; 19-30 January 1943 and 3 January-9 October 1943 -- operations in the Northern Caucasus; 12-30 January 1943 -- breakthrough of the blockade of Leningrad by troops of the Leningrad and Volkov fronts;

13-27 January 1943 -- the Ostrogozhsk-Rossosh Operation of the Voronezh Front; 24 January-2 February 1943 -- the Voronezh-Kastornoye Operation of the Voronezh and Bryansk fronts.

6. "Istoriya...," op. cit., Vol 6, pp 36-37.
7. "Sovershenno sekretno! Tol'ko dlya komandovaniya" [Top Secret! For Command Authorities Only], documents and materials, Moscow, Nauka, 1967, page 635.
8. L. I. Brezhnev, "Leninskij kursom. Rechi i stat'i" [Following a Leninist Course. Speeches and Articles], Vol 2, Moscow, Politizdat, 1970, page 68.

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ARMED FORCES

COMBINED ARMS TACTICS AT STALINGRAD

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[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Candidate of Historical Sciences Col. R. Mazurkevich: "Tactics of Combined-Arms Combat"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] The Battle of Stalingrad was an important stage in the evolution of tactics of the combined-arms engagement. The Soviet Army became enriched with the experience of organizing for and conducting defensive and offensive engagements.

At the commencement of this battle the defense of our forces was for the most part of a center-of-resistance type. Field fortification of defended areas was still inadequate. Later, as the combat capabilities of the combined units increased, field fortification of the main defensive zone improved considerably. The support echelons of rifle divisions and regiments began establishing battalion defense areas at depth (2 km in frontage and 1.5-2 km in depth), which marked the beginning of organization of several positions within the first defensive zone. Its total depth was running 4-6 km. Lines along which to deploy an army's support echelon and reserves would be designated and prepared within its boundaries. In some rifle divisions (33rd Guards, 147th, 181st, and 192nd Rifle divisions) a security zone would be established 1.5-3 km forward of the main defensive zone, occupied by security forces. Reinforcement of combined units with artillery and tanks enabled division commanders to establish stronger artillery groups and reserves. All this considerably strengthened the stability of the defense.

At the beginning of the battle the width of the rifle division defense areas was even somewhat greater than at Moscow, running 15-18 km or more. In the course of fighting, as the number of troops in the Stalingrad sector grew, the army commanders were able to designate narrower defensive areas on the enemy's presumed main axes of advance. In August 1942, for example, the 131st, 62nd, and 399th Rifle divisions of the 62nd Army were defending in 11-13 km zones.¹ Narrowing of the defense areas of the combined units made it possible to increase tactical densities. At Moscow they ran 0.2-0.5 rifle battalions and 5-7 guns and mortars per km of frontage, while at Stalingrad they increased

to 0.6-0.8 battalions and 10-12 guns.² As was demonstrated by the course of combat operations, however, even these densities were insufficient. Not only direct-fire but also indirect-fire artillery began to be extensively employed against tanks, on which the German-fascist command authorities were continuing to count heavily. Antiaircraft artillery was employed to destroy enemy tanks which had broken through.

Artificial obstacles were an effective means of combating enemy tanks in the defensive engagements between the Volga and the Don. Density of minelaying was considerably greater than in 1941 and ran, for example, 345 antitank and 217 antipersonnel mines per kilometer of frontage in the defense areas of the rifle divisions of the 62nd Army in July, and 800 and 650 mines respectively in October.³ The experience of combat actions in a defensive battle demonstrated that the effectiveness of minefields laid in the course of combat was considerably greater than minefields laid in advance ahead of the main line of resistance. Therefore obstacle construction detachments and teams were extensively employed by the combined units in defensive engagements. Their principal method of action was surprise, undetected laying of mines on the adversary's avenues of advance in the rifle division defense areas.

When the enemy commenced an assault phase, the defending troops of the rifle division forward echelon, delivering fire from all types of weapons, and also employing minefields, sought to inflict maximum losses and casualties and to thwart the advance. Fighting in the first position assumed an exceptionally determined character. Rifle troops would cut infantry off from the tanks, which would be engaged by artillery; rifle troops would fight off enemy assaults, preventing the Hitlerites from penetrating the defense and splitting up the defending force. When infantry and tanks would penetrate the first position, rifle division commanders, counterattacking with support echelons and reserves, sought to prevent deeper enemy penetration and to reestablish the defense.

If the enemy succeeded in breaking through the forward echelon's defense, he would meet organized resistance as a rule in the second position. Units and subunits defending in the first position would continue maintaining a perimeter defense or, with the permission of the higher-echelon commander, would withdraw to the second position, attempting with determined actions to prevent deepening of the penetration and widening toward the flanks. The fighting was exceptionally stubborn. As a rule counterattacks were of an organized nature. They involved considerably more men and weapons than previously. As was demonstrated by the combat experience of defensive engagements, timely, bold maneuver by men and weapons from sectors not under attack and reserves to a threatened axis was of great importance in fighting successfully to hold the main defensive zone.

The aggressiveness and stability of defense by rifle divisions steadily increased in the course of the Battle of Stalingrad. At the beginning of the operation the enemy was able to penetrate our shallow and weakly-fortified tactical defense, while by the end of the battle (in the December fighting, when repelling an attack to relieve the encircled forces) breakthrough of the main defensive zone was a rare occurrence.

Tactics of the defensive combined-arms engagement were enriched in the Battle of Stalingrad by the experience of COMBAT OPERATIONS IN A BUILT-UP AREA. The rifle division's defense in these conditions was based on strongpoints and centers of resistance defended by garrisons running from a rifle squad to a company in strength. All masonry buildings and structures (rubble) were adapted for perimeter defense and linked into centers of resistance by breaching adjacent walls and digging communication trenches. Slit trenches and foxholes were dug around buildings, and artificial obstacles were constructed on building approaches, which would be covered by a system of flanking and oblique fire of all types from adjacent buildings and special weapon placements. Weapons would frequently be arranged in several tiers: artillery pieces and mortars below, antitank rifles and machineguns positioned higher, and other small arms at the top tier.

Almost all the artillery remaining in Stalingrad was employed as direct-fire weapons. Tanks were employed in small groups (3-7 tanks) as stationary weapon positions, would be emplaced or positioned in ambushes. Of particular importance in street fighting was fire delivered by submachineguns, machineguns, artillery and tanks at close range. Grenades, Molotov cocktails, demolition charges, and smoke pots were extensively employed. Defense of blocks, large buildings and important installations was handled by several teams and detachments, organized into garrisons commanded by an officer.

The experience obtained in the fighting at Stalingrad was subsequently extensively disseminated among the Soviet Army forces and was reflected in field manuals.

Many questions pertaining to the COMBINED-ARMS OFFENSIVE ENGAGEMENT experienced further development in the Battle of Stalingrad. The depth of combat missions assigned to combined units and units was somewhat increased in comparison with the Battle of Moscow. The 47th Guards and 119th Rifle divisions of the 5th Tank Army, for example, were assigned an immediate objective at a depth of 6 km, with a subsequent objective to 19 and 28 km.⁴ In some cases divisions were also assigned a day's mission, which consisted in breaking through the enemy's entire tactical zone of defense and capturing important strongpoints at operational depth (63rd, 76th, and 293rd Rifle divisions of the 21st Army).⁵ As the course of combat operations demonstrated, however, such missions were beyond the capabilities of the majority of rifle divisions.

The need to penetrate an enemy defense which was disposed in depth and to build up combat efforts for offensive exploitation on the designated axis of advance dictated the establishment of support echelons in the combined units and units. In December 1942, for example, the rifle divisions of the 1st Guards Army were organized in two echelons, while in the 3rd Guards Army divisions were formed in a single echelon, but the regiments had two echelons.⁶

Rifle divisions operating on the main axes of advance of armies would be assigned zones of advance up to 5 km wide (119th, 124th and 63rd Rifle divisions). They would also execute breakthrough in these zones. Subsequently, however, as a rule they would be designated breakthrough sectors amounting to 40-50 percent of the width of the zone of advance (293rd and 422nd rifle divisions),⁷ which

made it possible to establish higher tactical densities there: 2-3 rifle battalions, 40-70 guns and mortars, and 10-12 tanks per kilometer.

The attack position was brought close to the enemy's main line of resistance. Rifle division units would usually take up the attack position at a distance of as little as 300 meters, while at Moscow this distance was 800-1000 meters. This shortened the distance covered by assault to contact, ensured the element of surprise, and reduced rifle troop casualties inflicted by hostile fire.

The specific features by combat in a built-up area led to the establishment of assault teams numbering from 5-10 to 20-30 men armed with submachineguns, machineguns, antitank rifles, and in many instances mortars and sniper rifles.⁸ They would be reinforced with combat engineers, artillery, flamethrowers and, less frequently, tanks, and would be subdivided into smaller teams by combat missions assigned: obstacle clearing, assault, consolidation, and reserve. Combat by an assault team would be supported by other subunits. In the assault on the Railroaders' House, for example, the commander of the 42nd Guards Rifle Regiment, Col I. P. Yelin, designated three assault teams (6-8 men each). An additional 82 men of the most varied military occupational specialties were designated to support the assault.⁹ Combat within the city was distinguished by particular complexity and intensity. It required of commanders and all personnel a degree of military skill, initiative, stick-to-itiveness and resoluteness.

Artillery support of the infantry and tank assault improved somewhat; it was conducted by the method of successive fire concentration to a depth of 1-1.5 km. During the operation to defeat in detail the encircled enemy force, artillery support of the assault in the rifle divisions of the 65th army in January 1943 involved a single rolling barrage to a depth of 1-1.2 km, while artillery density in breakthrough sectors increased to 160-165 guns and mortars per km of frontage.¹⁰

In combined-arms combat in the battles between the Volga and Don, direct infantry support tanks were employed in closer coordination with the subunits and units of other combat arms than in the preceding period.

Combat operations of rifle combined units assumed a more fluid character. During fighting deep in the enemy's defense, divisional and attached artillery as a rule would advance on the heels of the rifle units, ready to provide fire support to the advance of the regiments and to repulse counterattacks by enemy tanks and infantry.

All this made it possible to penetrate the enemy's defense at a faster pace than previously. In the fighting at Moscow frequently it would take 2 or 3 days to break through a defense 3-4 km in depth, while in the operations between the Volga and Don a defense up to 6 km in depth would usually be breached on the first day. Subsequently rifle divisions were advancing at a rate of 10-15 km per day and more.¹¹ Large-scale pursuit of retreating enemy troops was conducted. Rifle divisions usually designated for pursuit forward detachments consisting of a rifle company, an artillery battery of a tank-destroyer regiment,

and a platoon of combat engineers. Such a detachment, moving by truck ahead of the division's main forces, would seize important installations and hold them until the main forces arrived.

The Battle of Stalingrad was a new stage in the evolution of reconnaissance in force. In the first period of the war it was conducted by Soviet troops in independent rifle divisions, while during preparation for the counteroffensive in November 1942, on instructions by Army Gen G. K. Zhukov, Hq SHC representative, it was organized in all divisions advancing on the armies' main axes of advance, 2-10 days before the offensive. It was conducted by reinforced rifle companies and battalions. Its purpose was to determine the actual trace of the main line of resistance and to determine whether positions were occupied by enemy troops, thus to eliminate artillery and airstrike preparation in areas of the enemy's defense which had been abandoned or were weakly defended.

Troop control in combat improved somewhat in the Battle of Stalingrad. As a rule organization for combat by the commanders of combined units would be conducted directly on the terrain, and careful coordination of matters pertaining to teamwork and cooperation in execution of combat missions became the rule for all command personnel. Determination of the sequence and modes of action by rifle units and subunits, attached and supporting weapons when fighting in the security zone, when repelling enemy assaults, and in combat to hold the main defensive zone was the principal content of teamwork and coordination in the defense. In organizing coordination during the period of an offensive, principal attention was now focused on ensuring that artillery, air and engineer subunits enabled tanks and infantry to execute a swift assault, to accomplish rapid capture of strongpoints in the enemy's first defensive position, and aggressive deep offensive exploitation. This was promoted by acquisition of combat experience by the majority of Soviet Army commanders, equipping rifle combined units with communications gear, and bringing command and control facilities closer to the combat troops. As a rule rifle division command posts were sited 2.5-3 km from the FEBA, observation posts were positioned at 1-1.5 km, and regimental command posts and observation posts were located at 1-1.5 km and 500-800 m respectively. Commanders could observe the subunits in battle and promptly respond to a change in the combat situation.

Thus in the Battle of Stalingrad the tactics of combined-arms combat became enriched with experience in organizing for and conducting defensive and offensive combat in field conditions and in a large city.

Evolution of the tactics of the Soviet Army was determined by the growing level of equipment of combined units and units with combat hardware and weapons, the high political-moral state of the troops, total dedication to the homeland by all personnel, and innovative activities by commanders pertaining to continuous improvement of modes of organization for and conduct of combat. Success in combined-arms combat was achieved through the efforts of all combat arms, with their close mutual coordination, extensive maneuver of men and weapons, a high degree of aggressiveness and tenaciousness by Soviet troops in combat against the enemy, as well as by firm troop control.

The combat operations experience of combined units, units, and subunits in the Battle of Stalingrad was extensively utilized by the Soviet Army in subsequent operations, was reflected in field manuals published during the war, while certain points have retained their significance in present-day conditions.

FOOTNOTES

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Fund 345, List 5487, File 5, sheets 144-145, 155.
2. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1976, page 33.
3. TsAMO, Fund 345, List 5487, File 5, sheets 29-32.
4. TsAMO, Fund 331, List 5041, File 17, sheets 2-6.
5. TsAMO, Fund 335, List 4885, File 131, sheets 58-61.
6. "Velikaya pobeda na Volge" [Great Victory on the Volga], Voyenizdat, 1965, pp 324-326.
7. TsAMO, Fund 423, List 5130, File 3, Sheet 180.
8. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 2, 1977, page 28.
9. TsAMO, Fund 14, List 11603, File 70, Sheet 9.
10. TsAMO, Fund 422, List 12568, File 1, Sheet 38.
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ARMED FORCES

PARTY-POLITICAL WORK DURING THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 82 (signed to press 25 Oct 82) pp 76-81

[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Docent and Candidate of Historical Sciences Col Yu. Lavrusha: "Party-Political Work in the Counteroffensive"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] An enormous role in the Battle of Stalingrad was played by lively, purposeful party-political work. "It constituted that foundation on which people's will to win and faith in victory grew," wrote MSU A. M. Vasilevskiy.¹ Principal attention in the conduct of party-political work among the troops in the defensive period was devoted to instilling in officers and men an indomitable staunchness, steel tenaciousness and discipline, and willingness to surmount any and all difficulties. It basically boiled down to the demand: "Not one step back!" and "Our place is not across the Volga!" Political rallies, party and Komsomol meetings were held under these slogans, and this idea permeated orders and directives, all appeals and proclamations. To stand firm meant to win, to save the homeland, to save the world from fascist enslavement.

Instilling in the men a powerful offensive drive and an unbending striving to achieve decisive defeat of the enemy became the principal content of party-political work when preparing troops for the counteroffensive. All this work was conducted under the following slogans: "We can and must sweep the Hitlerite filth from Soviet soil," "That day is not far off when the enemy will experience the force of new attacks by the Red Army!" and "There will be a celebration on our street as well!" Party-political work during this period possessed specific features. It was conducted in conditions of a reorganization: pursuant to an Ukase of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet dated 9 October 1942, the institution of military commissars in the Armed Forces was abolished, and total one-man command was established. The importance of this enactment lay primarily in the fact that it enhanced the role of the commander in strengthening the army and navy. As the fully-empowered leader of a subunit, unit, or combined unit, he was obliged to engage more deeply in matters of political indoctrination of personnel. Thus the link between party-political work and the daily activities and combat tasks of the troops became closer.

But commanders and political workers were faced with complex tasks in preparing for a counteroffensive. In connection with the shift from defensive to offensive operations, it was essential to achieve a PSYCHOLOGICAL TURNING POINT in the consciousness of the men. Preparation for the offensive took place in conditions of intensive combat against the enemy, who was continuing to drive forward, counting on success. Another important circumstance was the fact that large masses of mobile troops were to be employed in the forthcoming offensive operations. Only a narrow circle of top-echelon command personnel knew about preparations for the operation. Combat training in the combined units was conducted within the overall plan of offensive operations, without indicating specific plan or timetable. Party-political work was also conducted taking these specific features into account.

Preparations for the counteroffensive coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. This imparted even greater scope to party-political work and helped strengthen its influence on personnel. Appeals issued by the Central Committee of the ACP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks)], a report by State Defense Committee Chairman I. V. Stalin, and a People's Commissar of Defense order in honor of the anniversary were communicated to every serviceman and explained in detail. These documents specified a task for the next stage in the struggle -- liberation of Soviet soil from the German-fascist invaders. They infused the troops with enormous political enthusiasm and helped instill an aggressive spirit. Political rallies, party and Komsomol meetings were held in the units and combined units. An extensive body of party activists, from subunit agitators to commanding generals of armies and fronts, took part in dissemination of materials devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Great October Revolution.

Military councils and political agencies attached particular importance to ideological-political indoctrination of servicemen and DISSEMINATION OF LENIN'S TEACHING on defense of the socialist homeland. An exceptionally important role in political indoctrination of personnel was played by publication in 1942, at the initiative of the party Central Committee, of a number of writings by V. I. Lenin, including Volume 34 of the Lenin Collection, which contained valuable instructions on organization of defense of the young Soviet Republic. Publication of the book "Lenin Vladimir Il'ich. Kratkiy ocherk zhizni i deyatel'nosti" [Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. Concise Sketch of His Life and Career] was an important event. Dissemination of Lenin documents helped commanders, political agencies and party organizations unite the men and inspire them to feats of military valor.

An important place in party-political work was assigned to STRENGTHENING ONE-MAN COMMAND. Attention was focused on increasing the authority and prestige of one-man commanders as well as discipline and organization in the units. Military councils, political agencies, and party organizations performed the job of explaining the essence and significance of one-man command. Conferences of commanders and political workers, party and Komsomol activists were held everywhere. Command cadres were infused with a strong sense of personal responsibility to the party and state for accomplishing combat missions as well as a high degree of demandingness on themselves and their subordinates. They were taught to be highly concerned for their men and to rely skillfully on the party and Komsomol organizations.

The question of strengthening the FRIENDSHIP AMONG SERVICEMEN OF DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES, and particularly indoctrination of servicemen of non-Russian nationality, assumed exceptional importance in party-political work in the period of preparation for the counteroffensive. This was dictated by the fact that in the latter half of 1942 there occurred a considerably greater influx of new replacements from the Central Asian and other republics. In many units and combined units 40 to 50 percent of the Red Armymen were of non-Russian nationality.² Organization of political work with these men was complicated by the fact that many of them spoke Russian poorly or not at all. On the instructions of the ACP(b) Central Committee, more than 500 Communists from the body of high-echelon party and soviet activists were assigned by oblast committees and central committees of the Communist parties of the union republics to serve as regular full-time agitators in the political directorates of the fronts and the political departments of the armies.³ The military councils and political agencies of the fronts sent commanders, political workers, agitators, party and Komsomol organizers who were fluent in the languages of the peoples of the USSR to units and combined units in which non-Russians comprised a majority. Newspapers in the men's native languages were published in the fronts. Letters containing orders from home and appeals from the working people, received by the combined units from every corner of our homeland, exerted enormous indoctrinal influence. They were communicated to each and every serviceman, and political rallies, meetings, and discussions were devoted to them. All this helped strengthen the indissoluble friendship of the peoples of our country and helped instill hatred toward the enemy.

Readying for a counteroffensive, military councils and political agencies devoted principal attention to those combined units which would be operating on the main axes of advance. This work was conducted in a differentiated manner, taking into account the situation, the state of the troops, and the missions they would be performing. Col Gen A. S. Zheltov, for example, former member of the Military Council of the Don and the Southwestern fronts, recalls that the military council, jointly with the political directorate, determined the principal tasks of party-political work in each army, its main directional thrusts, and placement of political cadres. In the units of the 5th Tank Army, which had been redeployed from the Bryansk Front, it was necessary to teach the men on a faster timetable, to impart to them the experience of the veteran soldiers, to help the men familiarize themselves with the new situation, and to tell them about the enemy's specific features. Among the troops of the 1st Guards, 5th, and 21st armies, which would be engaged in aggressive offensive actions, efforts were directed toward moral-political and psychological preparation of personnel to shift to the offensive.⁴ From 12 through 15 November the division political sections in all fronts held seminars with regiment and battalion political workers on the subject of stepping up party-political work.

One typical feature in the course of preparations for the counteroffensive was the fact that SUBUNITS -- COMPANIES, BATTALIONS, AND CREWS -- WERE THE CENTER OF ATTENTION. Political agencies of all echelons worked on establishing and strengthening party and Komsomol organizations in the subunits. Measures were taken to ensure correct distribution of Communists and Komsomol members among platoons, crews, and companies, and efforts were stepped up to recruit to party

membership men who had distinguished themselves in battle. By the beginning of the counteroffensive there were party organizations or party groups in almost all subunits. For example, by mid-November 1942 841 company and equivalent party organizations were operating in the 21st Army, while party-Komsomol groups had been formed in 217 subunits.⁵ In November alone the party organizations of the Stalingrad Front accepted to their ranks more than 5300 officers and men -- three times as many as in July of that same year, including 120 Tatars, 95 Kazakhs, 57 Uzbeks, 57 Armenians, 39 Georgians, 28 Azerbaijani, 17 Bashkirs, 14 Tajiks, and 124 men of other non-Russian nationalities.⁶

The level of party-political work was placed by the Central Committee in a direct link with the overall state of combat proficiency of the troops, with their capability successfully to accomplish combat missions. Therefore considerable attention in political work was devoted to study and explanation of the demands of the Infantry Field Manual ratified on 9 November 1942. The ideas and requirements of this manual formed the basis for organization of combat training and preparation of troops for the counteroffensive.

One of the most important tasks of party-political work was training of new replacements. In some combined units they comprised approximately 60 percent of personnel.⁷ As a rule the new replacements lacked combat experience and proficiency. In connection with this, in addition to intensified combat training, exchange of combat experience and know-how was widely practiced. Veteran officers and enlisted men related to the newcomers the combat history and traditions of the units and subunits. Commanders and political workers utilized as one of the forms of moral-psychological effect on the young soldiers an official ceremony at which they were handed their combat weapon, before the assembled troops, and sometimes before the unit's colors.

Special attention in party-political work was devoted to instilling in Soviet servicemen a sacred sense of hatred toward the German-fascist invaders and thorough explanation of the military-political significance of defeat of the enemy at Stalingrad. The Political Directorate of the Southwestern Front ordered that discussions be held in all subunits on the following topics: "Stalingrad shall become a grave for the enemy force"; "We shall crush the enemy at Stalingrad, and we shall liberate the Volga fortress from the Hitlerite scum." In order to encompass personnel with political influence during the offensive, unit and subunit political workers arranged to train and place platoon and squad agitators and held a conference with them on the content, forms and methods of their work.

When the operation order came, received by the units and combined units during the night prior to the counteroffensive, the main thing in party-political work was now explanation to each and every man of his role and place in the forthcoming battle. Concrete tasks were assigned to Communists and Komsomol members at brief meetings of party and Komsomol organizations. Wherever the situation permitted, political rallies were held. At these rallies officers and men solemnly pledged to carry out with honor their duty to the homeland. The general mood was well expressed by Red Armyman N. S. Pushkarev of the 434th Rifle Regiment of the 169th Rifle Division. He declared on behalf of his

comrades in arms: "We are proud that a great honor has fallen to our lot -- to crush the Germans at Stalingrad. We shall carry out with honor the orders of the command authorities."⁸

The order calling for the counteroffensive evoked a powerful surge of patriotic enthusiasm among personnel. It was expressed in the most diversified forms. In the rear-area units the great bulk of officers and men requested to be sent to the front lines. In the 65th Army of the Don Front, for example, more than 1000 such requests were received in 3 days. A noble desire for direct participation in defeating the Hitlerites was also expressed in refusal by the majority of lightly-wounded men to leave the front lines for a military hospital. Privates Stepanenko, Solomakhin, Popov, Yefimov, and others from a signal company of the 39th Guards Rifle Division of the 62nd Army, who had been wounded in combat, requested to remain with their subunit and not to be sent to the rear. "Our wounds will heal here as well," they wrote, "and we can still accomplish a great deal in the fight with the enemy."⁹

Appeals by the military councils of fronts were an exceptionally effective and efficient means of political influence on personnel. The military council of the Southwestern Front, for example, issued the following appeal: "The time has come to settle accounts with the cruel enemy. The order has been given. Advance in a crushing avalanche, glorious fighting men!"¹⁰

After the COUNTEROFFENSIVE commenced, command authorities, political agencies, and party organizations efficiently handled newly arising tasks. The offensive operations demanded of the men a considerable exertion of mental and physical energy. Political agency workers remained continuously in the units. They helped commanders organize for combat, and they helped party and Komsomol organizers maintain continuous party influence on personnel and helped them correct revealed deficiencies in a prompt and timely manner. Continuity of party-political work in the new conditions was provided by means of such basic forms as individual and group discussions, communication of orders to personnel, appeals by military councils, Sovinformbyuro news summaries, organization of radio broadcasts, political information sessions, publication of combat news bulletins, reading of newspapers, etc. The personal example of commanders, political workers, and Communists was an exceptionally effective mobilizing means. The commanding officer was taken out of action during fighting for a hill being held by the 2nd Battalion of the 143rd Rifle Brigade. The subunit's party bureau secretary, Antonov, took over command. Supported by 17 tanks, the enemy assaulted the hill and reached the hillcrest. We were in danger of losing this tactically important position. Taking advantage of a relative lull in the action that night, Antonov talked to the Communists, Komsomol members and all the men, giving them encouragement, and made a bold decision -- to drive the Hitlerites off the crest. Just before dawn the men crept silently toward the enemy positions. Antonov gave the command: "Attack!" Party member Senior Sergeant Abramov was the first on his feet, with the shout "Forward, for the homeland!" He was immediately followed by the rest of the men. Thanks to this determined attack, with the element of surprise, the battalion once again seized the commanding hillcrest.¹¹

Award of DECORATIONS AND MEDALS TO OFFICERS AND MEN WHO HAD DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN BATTLE was an effective means in the hands of commanders and political agencies for accomplishing combat missions. Between 25 November and 10 December 1942 a total of 1457 military personnel were decorated in 6 combined units of the Don Front.¹² Orders announcing combat decorations would be immediately communicated to personnel. The sending of letters to the families of decoration recipients was widely practiced. Before sending them, the letters would be discussed with all the men. In the units of the 84th Rifle Division, for example, more than 100 letters of thanks were discussed and sent off within a short period of time.¹³ This helped boost the men's fighting spirit. Figures on the award of decorations attest to the vanguard role of Communists and their high degree of combat activeness. By February 1943 2738 Communists had been awarded medals and decorations just in the 62nd Army, comprising more than 37 percent of all recipients.¹⁴

"Pass along" leaflets were devoted to men who had distinguished themselves in battle. Here are the contents of one such leaflet: "ACP(b) member Ivan Markovich Lavrov, machinegunner, displayed an example of bravery and courage in today's battle. He destroyed an enemy tank with grenades, and he killed 25 Hitlerites with his machinegun. Comrades! Take an example from this fearless fighting man."¹⁵

Komsomol members were the combat assistants of commanders and political workers. They, just as the Communists, were out ahead in everything. A total of 7659 Komsomol members in the Don Front were awarded medals and decorations for combat deeds performed in the course of defeating the German-fascist forces at Stalingrad.¹⁶

Special propaganda was aggressively conducted among the enemy's troops during the counteroffensive. The morale of the encircled troops was strongly affected by an ultimatum announced on 8 January, demanding that General Paulus stop the senseless struggle and surrender. Although it was rejected, leaflets containing the contents of the ultimatum had a powerful influence on the enemy officers and men. In January Soviet aircraft dropped more than 13 million leaflets into the encirclement area, while more than 30 million different leaflet texts were disseminated during the process of defeating the enemy force. Tens of thousands of broadcasts were disseminated via loudspeakers and radios.¹⁷

On 2 February 1943 the troops of the Don Front completing mopping up the encircled enemy force. Thus ended one of the most grandiose, stubborn and prolonged battles of World War II, which lasted 200 days and nights.

The historic Battle of Stalingrad demonstrated the enormous importance of aggressive, purposeful party-political work and the necessity of forming and deepening a Communist ideological outlook in each and every serviceman, the need to affirm in people's consciousness Soviet patriotism, faith in triumph of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, and conviction about the righteousness and invincibility of socialism.

FOOTNOTES

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3. See "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 5, Voyenizdat, 1975, page 307.
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7. "Istoriya...," ibid., Vol 6, page 51.
8. V. S. Krasavin, A. M. Borodin, and I. M. Loginov, "Podvig Stalingrada" [The Feat of Stalingrad], Volgograd, Nizhne-Volzhskoye knizhnoye izd-vo, 1975, pp 131-132.
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12. Ibid., page 236.
13. "Ideologicheskaya...," op. cit., page 122.
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15. Ibid., pp 122-123.
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AIR FORCE

AIR SUPPORT AT STALINGRAD

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[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Chief of the Main Staff of the Air Force Mar Avn G. Skorikov: "Combat Employment of Air Forces"]

[Text] The art of combat employment of the Soviet Air Force experienced further development at the Battle of Stalingrad.

In the summer of 1942 Wehrmacht command authorities selected the southwestern axis as the main axis of advance. A large air force of 1200 aircraft was concentrated in the Stalingrad sector by 17 July with this objective in mind. The enemy's air units and combined units were based for the most part at permanent airfields.

At the beginning of the defensive operation the 8th Air Army of the Stalingrad Front (Maj Gen Avn T. T. Khryukin, commanding; Maj Gen Avn Ya. S. Shkurin, and Col N. G. Seleznev effective 18 August 1942, chief of staff) totaled 454 combat aircraft, including 74 night bombers. Also operating there were as many as 150-200 long-range bombers and 60 fighters of the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division (Col I. I. Krasnoyurchenko, and effective 17 October 1942 Col I. G. Puntus, division commander). Thus German-fascist air power in that sector was more than double that of the Soviet Air Force.¹ Enemy military aviation also enjoyed qualitative superiority: only 50 percent of the aircraft in the 8th Air Army were of new types (YaK-1, IL-2, PYe-2).

Organization of airfield basing had specific features. The steppe terrain made it possible to set up temporary airfields very quickly, but the lack of forest made it difficult to conceal them. Existing fields were at a considerable distance from one another. This caused great difficulties in the operational-tactical employment of aviation and its logistic support.

In spite of a disadvantageous correlation of forces, Soviet air activities became increasingly aggressive. During conduct of defense on the far approaches to Stalingrad, for example, 450-460 aircraft sorties were flown daily on the average, while during combat operations for the city proper the figure was 670-680.

Our Air Force's principal efforts were directed toward killing personnel and destroying equipment on the battlefield, providing air cover to friendly troops, defending important installations, and escorting bombers and ground-attack aircraft. Up to 84 percent of all aircraft-sorties were flown in performance of these missions.²

Of great importance for organization of air combat operations were orders issued by the USSR People's Commissar of Defense, directing fighter aviation to perform the most important mission -- to destroy fascist bombers and prevent them from dropping bombs on our troops and defended installations. At the same time they stressed the need to increase the power of bombing strikes against the enemy by employing fighters. "The experience of the war has shown," stated one of the orders, "that our fighters can successfully perform secondary missions of daylight bombers on the battlefield and in the immediate rear areas, at a depth of 20-30 km from the battle line."³

Actions by our aviation units and combined units were of a fluid nature. Strikes would shift sequentially from one sector to another, depending on the situation. At the end of July 1942, for example, during execution of a front counterthrust by the forces of the 1st and 4th Tank armies and part of the forces of the 21st and 62nd armies, with the objective of destroying the threat of a Hitlerite advance on Stalingrad, the main efforts of the 8th Air Army were concentrated on destroying the enemy's Verkhnebuzinovskaya force. Through the combined efforts of ground and air forces, the enemy's 6th Army was stopped on the west bank of the Don.

Later the air army provided air cover for the front operational force under the command of Gen V. I. Chuykov, which was defending Stalingrad on the southwest against the 4th Panzer Army and Romanian troops which had shifted to the offensive on 31 July, and was supporting it from the air. A shortage of aircraft was being compensated for at great effort: each aircrew was averaging 3-4 missions a day. During this period the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division was also providing air cover to ground troops.

In view of the complexity of the situation, by 20 August 1942 several long-range air divisions (Lt Gen Avn A. Ye. Golovanov, commanding), acting on orders by Hq SHC [Headquarters, Supreme High Command], were redeployed from Moscow closer to the tactical area of operations. This made it possible to step up air actions against the enemy.

An important role in increasing the effectiveness of air operations and in altering the correlation of forces was played by air combined units and units from the SHC Reserve which were brought in to reinforce the air armies. For example, the 287th Fighter Division, under the command of Col S. P. Danilov, came to augment the 8th Air Army; the personnel of this division had just retrained on the new LA-5 fighters. In a period of 27 days the pilots of this combined unit successfully fought 299 air engagements, destroying 97 enemy aircraft.⁴

A distinctive feature of air combat operations was a sharp increase in the percentage share of night actions. During the period of the defensive operation in

the Stalingrad sector, it rose to 47 percent of all aircraft-sorties flown by the Soviet Air Force.⁵ Night bombers inflicted considerable losses on the German-fascist forces and did great detriment to the morale of the enemy personnel. On 7 September, for example, reconnaissance spotted in the vicinity of Gumrak a large concentration of enemy forces poised for an attack. The 272nd Night Bomber Division (Col P. O. Kuznetsov, commanding) delivered a concentrated strike on this force during the night of 8 September, as a result of which it was unable to launch the attack at the designated time.

Adoption of an improved organizational structure by the Air Force -- air armies -- was a new phenomenon in the course of the defense. This helped increase striking power and made it possible to employ aircraft in a massive fashion. At first the 8th Air Army operated in the Stalingrad sector, and subsequently the 16th was formed (Maj Gen Avn S. I. Rudenko, commander; Maj Gen Avn M. M. Kosykh, chief of staff). SHC Reserve aviation corps began forming in the summer of 1942, each consisting of 2-4 divisions. The number of combat aircraft in fighter regiments was increased from 22 to 32. Air regiments received personnel and equipment replacements in the course of combat operations. This increased their battleworthiness.

Of great importance for development of air tactics, especially fighter tactics, was synthesis of combat experience, on the basis of which command authorities and the Air Force staff prepared by the fall of 1942 and in December issued a Manual of Fighter Aviation Combat Procedures. The flight, consisting of two pairs of fighters, became the basic tactical unit. Tactics of ground-attack aircraft and bombers were also improved.

A characteristic feature was the fact that air forces, supporting ground troops, acquired their first experience in killing enemy troops and destroying enemy equipment in a large city. The principal targets of airstrikes were separate buildings occupied by the enemy, artillery, tanks, concentrations of troops and equipment on streets and in courtyards.

Matters of coordination with ground troops were worked on with greater precision than in the past. Ground-attack aircraft and fighters would hit the enemy directly on the FEBA, while frontal aviation bombers would deliver strikes 2-5 km from the battle line.

It is extremely important to note that radio began to be more extensively employed for control of air forces. On the basis of experience acquired in the battles of Leningrad and Moscow, a Manual on Fighter Guidance by Radio was prepared and issued in September 1942, which was an important guideline document and a practical aid for tactical air units and air defense fighters. A guidance radio net was set up in the 16th Air Army on the instructions of the commanding general of the Soviet Army Air Force. It included a central radio unit located in the area of the army command post, air division and regiment radio units, as well as guidance radio units located close to the battle line.

During the defense of Stalingrad frontal aviation, long-range aviation, and national air defense fighter aviation flew 77,000 aircraft-sorties. A total of 23,000 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy troops and other targets, 38,000

rocket projectiles were fired, and as many as 1.2 million cannon rounds and approximately 4 million machinegun rounds were expended.⁶

German-fascist air forces lost more than 1400 combat and transport aircraft in air combat and on the ground.⁷ The requisite conditions for gaining air superiority were established by the end of the defensive period.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE AT STALINGRAD, German-fascist troops were supported by the air forces of Army Group Don and part of the forces of the 4th Air Force.

The German-fascist air forces were opposed by the 17th Air Army (Maj Gen Avn S. A. Krasovskiy, commanding; Col K. I. Tel'nov, chief of staff) of the Southwestern Front, the 16th Air Army of the Don Front, and the 8th Air Army of the Stalingrad Front. Two composite aviation corps and 7 independent air divisions, by decision of Hq SHC, were transferred from the reserve to beef up the air armies of the three fronts. In addition, part of the forces of the 2nd Air Army of the Voronezh Front (Maj Gen Avn K. N. Smirnov, commanding; Col N. L. Stepanov, chief of staff), long-range aviation, as well as the 102nd National Air Defense Forces Fighter Division were transferred to beef up the Southwestern Front. Overall direction of all air combined units and formations was handled by the Hq SHC air representative, Col Gen Avn A. A. Novikov, commanding general of the Soviet Army Air Force.

We possessed superiority in total number of aircraft: we had 1350, while the enemy had more than 1200.⁹ This numerical superiority, especially in fighters, fostered successful accomplishment of the main task -- gaining air supremacy.

Basing of the air regiments of the 17th and 16th Air armies was brought closer to the breakthrough sectors. Air units of the 8th Air Army were disposed on the east bank of the Volga, 100-150 km from the breakthrough sectors. Due to a lack of requisite roads and inadequate motor transport, the airfields were not completely ready and contained limited supplies of fuel and ammunition.

The following missions were assigned to the air forces of the fronts during the counteroffensive: to provide the troops with air cover and protect installations in the rear areas against hostile air attack, to support the combat operations of the battle groups, especially tank and mechanized corps, and to conduct air reconnaissance.

In contrast to the operations of the first period of the Great Patriotic War, air forces were employed in massive fashion. This was achieved by concentrating the efforts of the air armies and long-range bombers only in the zones of advance of the fronts' battle groups and for carrying out the most important missions at the most critical stages of the operations. A new form of operational employment of air forces in a front offensive operation was born at Stalingrad -- the air offensive. This was a major step in the development of Air Force operational art. Adverse weather conditions, however, prevented it from being fully implemented. A wealth of experience obtained in organizing coordination with tank and mechanized corps, which were employed in the offensive as mobile task forces of combined-arms formations to exploit tactical into

operational success. For example, in order to achieve successful teamwork and cooperation with the 13th Tank and 4th Mechanized Corps of the Stalingrad Front deep in the enemy's defense, a ground-attack and fighter air regiment were attached to each. Command groups with communications gear were assigned to the mobile combined units from the air combined units which were operating in coordination with them.

For the first time Soviet military aviation successfully conducted combat actions during an operation to encircle and destroy a large enemy force. Principal air efforts were directed toward supporting the successful actions of ground troops to establish an inner perimeter of encirclement. After encirclement was completed, aircraft flew strikes on the surrounded force and missions to thwart enemy attempts to break the troops out of encirclement.

At the end of November the air forces were assigned the mission of destroying enemy transport aircraft attempting to supply the encircled force by air. In the first weeks primarily Ju-52 and FW-200 transport aircraft were used to airlift supplies to the encircled enemy troops. In connection with heavy losses, however, the Hitlerites were subsequently forced to use He-111 and Ju-88 bombers for this purpose.

The air armies of the fronts, long-range aviation and air defense fighters were enlisted to maintain the aerial blockade of the encircled force in the Stalingrad area. Meriting attention is the experience in organizing coordination between aircraft and antiaircraft artillery in these conditions. Authorities worked out modes of attack on air targets by fighters within their zone and within the antiaircraft artillery zone, which they might enter during pursuit of hostile aircraft.

The aerial blockade of the encircled force essentially achieved its objective. Approximately 1200 enemy aircraft were destroyed in the air and on the ground, including 80 percent of transport aircraft and bombers.¹¹ An attempt by the German command authorities to supply the large encircled force by air failed.

Mounting an aerial blockade was a new phenomenon in Air Force operational art. This experience was further developed in subsequent Soviet Armed Forces operations in the course of the Great Patriotic War (Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy, Budapest, Berlin, etc.).

The number of aircraft-sorties in strikes on enemy airfields increased sharply, with the objective of gaining and holding air superiority (from 3 percent during the defensive phase to 14 percent during the counteroffensive). More than 790 enemy aircraft were destroyed and damaged on the ground.¹² The campaign to gain operational air supremacy over Stalingrad had its specific features. In the Battle of Moscow air superiority was achieved at the end of the defensive phase, while here it was achieved on the very first days of the counteroffensive and maintained right up to the end of the strategic offensive operation.

The process of centralization of aircraft control continued in the Battle of Stalingrad. A new element in organization of command and control of air combined units at the air army level was the establishment of auxiliary control

facilities (VPU) on the main axes of advance of the fronts' forces. Radio control of fighter combat actions from specially established air combat control facilities (PUVB) experienced extensive development. Later they also began to be used for controlling ground-attack aircraft above the battlefield.

There was an increase in the percentage share of aerial reconnaissance in aviation combat activities. Due to the limited number of reconnaissance aircraft, it was conducted by all types of aircraft. Aerial photography was increasingly more extensively employed. One specific feature in the tactics of daylight bombers during the defensive phase was actions by single aircraft and small groups of aircraft from altitudes of 5000-6000 meters. Concentrated air-strikes were rare. During the counteroffensive bombers greatly intensified their day and night activities.

The percentage share of night bombing activities declined somewhat, but bombers continued to strike targets at operational depth of the enemy's defense in groups of up to 40 aircraft and more. Single aircraft or pairs of P0-2 and R-5 aircraft initiated sorties from staging airfields, to which they would move with the onset of darkness, in order to operate until dawn. Large installations would be hit simultaneously by 8-10 aircraft, which would approach the target from different directions and altitude-stacked. Bombs would be released from an altitude of 500-1000 meters, with the aircraft gliding on throttled-back engines. Illuminating bombs were employed to put light on the targets.

Ground-attack aircraft began to be employed with increasing frequency. During the counteroffensive these aircraft flew 15.2 percent of aircraft-sorties, while during the defensive phase ground-attack aircraft flew 8.6 percent of all Soviet aircraft-sorties. Following were the principal missions of ground-attack aircraft: to destroy troops and combat equipment on the battlefield (up to 82 percent of all aircraft-sorties), to knock out enemy aircraft on the ground (9.6 percent), and to conduct aerial reconnaissance (1.7 percent).¹³ IL-2 ground-attack aircraft were also used as daylight bombers. They flew all combat missions with a full bomb load. Bombing from an altitude of 800-1500 meters during level flight and a shallow dive at an angle of 30-35° was extensively employed. Aircraft bombed and fired their cannons and machineguns in an open formation (left and right bearing of the flights). Targets would be attacked with one or two passes. Each aircrew chose its own target and attacked it. A new ground-attack aircraft formation for attacking a target was extensively employed -- the "circle of aircraft." It provided reliable protection against attack by enemy fighters and made it possible to continue attacking the target for a longer time and to utilize the aircraft's armament in the most expedient manner.

In the Battle of Stalingrad fighters flew 38.1 percent of all aircraft-sorties flown by Soviet aviation during that period. A total of 52 percent of aircraft-sorties were for providing air cover to ground troops and defending installations, 29.5 percent for escorting bombers and ground-attack aircraft, and 13 percent for conduct of aerial reconnaissance.¹⁴ Fighters operated in pairs, forming groups of 6-8 aircraft each. Vertical maneuver began to be more extensively employed as new models became operational. Patrol zones began to be established above enemy dispositions. When engaged in joint actions with

bombers and ground-attack aircraft, fighters employed such modes of combat as escort to and from the target, "crowding" of enemy fighters from the area where friendly bombers and ground-attack aircraft would be operating, and sealing off airfields where enemy fighters were based.

During the offensive the aircraft of the fronts' air armies and long-range bombers flew 35,929 aircraft-sorties. They dropped a total of 141,000 bombs, 2720 projectiles with KS incendiary mixture, and expended 30,000 rocket projectiles. Considerable damage was inflicted on enemy troops, and during this period the enemy lost 3000 aircraft.¹⁵

Soviet air forces flew approximately 113,000 aircraft-sorties during the entire period of the defensive battle and the counteroffensive at Stalingrad.¹⁶ A total of more than 4400 enemy combat and transport aircraft were shot down in air combat and destroyed on the ground, including kills credited to the National Air Defense Forces and the troops of the fronts.¹⁷

The excellent moral-political qualities of our flight personnel, who were totally dedicated to the cause of the party of Lenin and the socialist homeland, were manifested particularly strongly in combat against enemy air power. Soviet pilots, in spite of the enemy's numerical superiority, boldly engaged in and successfully conducted aerial combat, displaying a high degree of skill and heroism. Communists and Komsomol members displayed models of courage and bravery in combat by personal example.

The exploits of our airmen were highly praised by the Communist Party and Soviet Government. Seventeen pilots and navigators were awarded the lofty title Hero of the Soviet Union for heroism and valor displayed during the conduct of combat missions. They include A. V. Alelyukhin, Amet-Khan-Sultan, V. M. Golubev, V. S. Yefremov, I. I. Kleshchev, S. I. Kulikov, V. D. Lavrinenkov, A. I. Molodchiy, I. S. Polbin, V. V. Sen'ko, and others. Nine air divisions were renamed guards divisions. For the first time in the Great Patriotic War two aviation corps, 12 air divisions and 21 air regiments received honorary appellations in honor of those cities in the fighting for which these units and combined units distinguished themselves.

* * *

A new form of operational employment of air forces in front offensive operations -- the air offensive -- was born in the Battle of Stalingrad and was later extensively employed and perfected in the operations of the second and third periods of the Great Patriotic War. An aerial blockade of an encircled large enemy force was organized for the first time. Concentration of air efforts in the most important sectors was accomplished in full measure. The struggle to gain and hold operational air superiority stepped up in intensity, and coordination with ground troops improved. Air command and control continued to be perfected. Establishment of an extensive network of command posts, organization of communications, attachment of command groups and air representatives to ground units, and employment of radio for control and guidance of aircraft to air and ground targets experienced further development. Night operations were extensively employed. Bombing and strafing attacks on pinpoint

targets within a city were employed for the first time. The combat experience acquired by the Soviet Air Force in the Battle of the Volga is also of inestimable importance in solving today's problems of military theory and practice.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voynы 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 5, Voyenizdat, 1975, page 158.
2. L. B. Korets, "Bitva pod Stalingradom. Boyevyye deystviya VVS" [The Battle of Stalingrad. Air Force Combat Operations], Monino, Izd. Voyenno-vozdushnoy akademii imeni Yu. A. Gagarina, 1961, page 17.
3. "Boyevyye deystviya Voyenno-Vozdushnykh Sил v bitve pod Stalingradom" [Air Force Combat Operations in the Battle of Stalingrad], Part I, "Defensive Battle," Voyenizdat, 1952, page 58.
4. "Sovetskiye Voyenno-Vozdushnyye Sily v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе 1941-1945 gg" [The Soviet Air Force in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945], Voyenizdat, 1968, page 103.
5. Ibid., page 115.
6. Ibid.
7. "Istoriya...," op. cit., Vol 5, page 193.
8. Footnote omitted.
9. "Istoriya...," op. cit., Vol 6, 1976, page 44; "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 7, Voyenizdat, 1979, page 518.
10. Footnote omitted.
11. "Sovetskiye...," op. cit., page 147.
12. Korets, op. cit., page 49.
13. Ibid., pp 51, 52.
14. Ibid., page 52.
15. "Sovetskiye...," op. cit., page 151.
16. Ibid., pp 114, 151.
17. "Istoriya...," op. cit., Vol 5, page 193; Vol 6, page 81.

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GROUND FORCES

ARTILLERY IN THE BATTLE FOR STALINGRAD

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[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Mar Arty G. Peredel'skiy, commander of Ground Forces rocket troops and artillery: "Artillery"]

[Text] All combat arms performed their combat missions equally selflessly at the Battle of Stalingrad, but nevertheless the rifle troops, armored troops and artillery bore the brunt of the struggle.

The defense of the Soviet troops at Stalingrad initially was as a rule of a focal nature. Subsequently concentration of efforts on the most important axes, increased depth of defense, densities of troops and equipment, and extensive maneuver of men and weapons from depth and parallel to the front were characteristic of troop operations, including artillery. The number of guns and mortars on the line more than tripled during the defensive fighting. On 17 July 1942 the armies operating in the Stalingrad sector possessed 4282 guns and mortars, while by the end of the defensive phase the number had increased to 12,078.¹ The increase in artillery was accomplished by beefing up the fronts and armies with SHC [Supreme High Command] Reserve artillery. At the beginning of the defensive battle the armies operating on the main axes had an artillery density of 10-13 guns and mortars per km of frontage, while by the end of the defensive phase density reached 40-60 guns and mortars in some sectors.² This enabled troops to establish a more stable defense and promoted accomplishment of the principal tasks: to halt the enemy's advance and to create favorable conditions for the troops to shift to a counteroffensive.

The artillery force grouping was established on the basis of specific-purpose designation. The armies contained long-range artillery groups (ADD), consisting of 3-4 or more artillery regiments, as well as rocket artillery groups (GMCh); the divisions contained infantry support (PP) artillery groups consisting of 1-2 battalions.

On 14 September 1942, when fighting in the city proper began, a front artillery group (FAG) was formed by decision of the military council of the Southeastern Front; this group contained 7 gun and 2 mortar regiments, a howitzer battalion, rocket artillery units, and subsequently antiaircraft artillery units, and the

artillery of the Volga Naval Flotilla. As of 20 September it totaled 250 guns and mortars (not including GMCh). Maj Gen Arty V. P. Dmitriyev was placed in command of the group. For ease of command and control, the group was divided into subgroups, a northern -- to support the 62nd Army; a southern -- to support the 64th Army, left-bank antiaircraft artillery and rocket launcher units,³ and subsequently the Volga Naval Flotilla as well.

Establishment of a front artillery group proved justified in the specific conditions of fighting for a large city, such as Stalingrad. Possessing such a powerful artillery group, the front command authorities were able rapidly to concentrate in a threatened sector the fires of large artillery forces, and thus to give immediate assistance to troops in the course of fighting to hold important installations within the city. This was a new element in the combat employment of artillery in the defense.

Combating tanks continued to be a most important mission of artillery in the defense. Repulsing assaults by large German-fascist panzer forces, Soviet artillerymen, operating in the difficult conditions of open steppe terrain and enemy air superiority, successfully engaged fascist tanks driving on Stalingrad.

An important factor in the subsequent development of antitank artillery and enhancement of its role as well as the combat skill of personnel was the 1 July 1942 order issued by the People's Commissar of Defense redesignating antitank artillery as tank-destroyer artillery. The order established a number of privileges for tank-destroyer artillery personnel, the wearing of a special sleeve insignia, as well as a cash reward for every disabled tank.

Antitank defense at Stalingrad was organized according to the principle of establishment of antitank strongpoints (PTOP) with extensive maneuver of artillery antitank reserves. It experienced further development than in the Battle of Moscow. For example, antitank strongpoints (containing 2-4 guns and several antitank rifles) as a rule began operating in coordination with company and battalion defense areas, and antitank artillery began to be disposed in considerable depth. Density of antitank guns, although still low, gradually increased from 4-5 (at the beginning) to 10-15 (at the end of the defensive battle) guns per km of frontage (including 6-7 guns in the main defensive zone). Artillery antitank reserves (APTR) were formed not only in the divisions and armies but also in the fronts. Usually a tank-destroyer battalion and less frequently a regiment would be designated to APTR in the divisions, 2-3 in the armies, and from 1 to 5 regiments in the fronts.

Enemy tanks could operate in any directions on the open steppe terrain on the bend of the Don. Therefore it was almost impossible to determine in advance the most likely avenues of tank approach. In these conditions swift maneuver of antitank artillery in the course of battle assumed particular importance. Artillery, especially tank-destroyer artillery, would frequently redeploy within armies and fronts, and sometimes even between fronts, to repulse attacks by large enemy panzer forces. On 23 July, for example, by decision of the commanding general of the 62nd Army, the 552nd, 555th and 1183rd Tank-Destroyer Artillery regiments, a GMCh regiment and an artillery battalion were moved together with the 184th Rifle Division to the right flank of the army zone where

the enemy had broken through, in order to beef up the defense of the troops in this sector. As a result of this maneuver, the defense of the forces on the army's right side became more stable, and further advance by the enemy was held back.⁴

Even more extensive maneuver by artillery took place in the latter half of August. The attack launched by the fascists on 20 August at the junction between the 64th and 57th armies in the general direction of Krasnoarmeysk was stopped thanks to the fact that in the course of two days, 21 and 22 August, 8 artillery regiments (seven of which were tank-destroyer regiments) were quickly moved from the 62nd Army and the Stalingrad Forming Center to the zone of the 57th Army of the Southeastern Front.⁵

Massive fire by the bulk of the army's artillery was extensively employed in the immediate defense of the city in the most important sectors. In the vicinity of the Barrikady Plant, for example, preparations were made to deliver massive fire by 320 guns, mortars and rocket-launcher trucks into the dispositions of two enemy infantry regiments which were poised for an attack. Delivering heavy shellfire for two periods of 10 minutes each, artillery inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, and the attack was thwarted.⁶

In the course of the defensive battle at Stalingrad, artillery delivered counterpreparation fire in a more organized fashion than previously (57th, 62nd, and 64th armies). In September-October, for example, in conditions of fierce fighting for such important objectives as Hill 102.0 (Mamai Hill), the Barrikady and Krasnyy Oktyabr' plants, the artillery of the 62nd Army (Maj Gen Arty N. M. Pozharskiy, in command of artillery) successfully conducted counter-bombardments. They were planned by the army artillery headquarters staff on the basis of instructions by the army commander. Participating elements included the northern subgroup of the front artillery group, a large part of the rocket artillery regiments, as well as divisional and antitank artillery operating in that sector. As a result in a number of instances the command authorities of the 62nd Army were able to boost artillery density to 100 guns, mortars and rocket launcher trucks per kilometer of frontage in those sectors (1-3 mm) where counterpreparation was being conducted.

On 5 October, for example, the artillery of five rifle divisions, two rifle brigades, the northern subgroup of the front artillery group, three tank-destroyer artillery regiments, and five rocket artillery regiments (a total of more than 300 guns, mortars and launcher trucks) took part in counterpreparation fire, against the German-fascist troops which were attempting to break through to the Volga between the Stalingrad Tractor Plant and the Barrikady Plant. Counterpreparation lasted 40 minutes and included two 10-minute periods of intensive shelling, plus deliberate fire. Such massive artillery fire inflicted enormous casualties on the enemy, who was not able to resume the attack in that sector until 5 days later.⁷

In the concluding phase of the defensive battle at Stalingrad, troops were secretly preparing to shift to the offensive. New artillery and mortar units were moved up to the breakthrough sectors, ammunition was hauled in, and intensive artillery reconnaissance was conducted.

A substantial increase in the number of independent SHC Reserve artillery units complicated their command and control as well as organization and delivery of massive fire in the course of operations. In view of this, at the end of October 1942 Hq SHC decided to establish SHC Reserve artillery divisions. By the beginning of the counteroffensive (19 November) 25 field, antiaircraft, and rocket artillery divisions had been formed on the various fronts or were in the process of formation. Some of them, such as the 1st, 4th, 7th, 11th, and 19th artillery divisions, the 2nd, 3rd, and 15th antiaircraft artillery divisions of the SHC Reserve, took active part in the counteroffensive at Stalingrad.

Hq SHC, in planning the counteroffensive, substantially beefed up the Stalingrad-sector fronts with artillery, assigning to them 75 additional artillery and mortar regiments. By the beginning of the counteroffensive there were a total of 250 artillery and mortar regiments in the fronts, containing more than 15,000 guns and mortars, that is, twice as many as in the counteroffensive at Moscow. In addition, the fronts had 1250 rocket artillery trucks and mounts, as well as 1100 antiaircraft guns.⁸ While in the counteroffensive at Moscow the enemy had a 40 percent superiority over our forces in artillery, in the counteroffensive at Stalingrad the artillery superiority (by a factor of 1.5) was on the side of the Soviet forces.

The Red Army's commander of artillery, Col Gen Arty N. N. Voronov, and his staff were very helpful to the artillery headquarters staff in preparing for the offensive. In October 1942 a group of artillery staff officers and general officers, led by N. N. Voronov, arrived in the Stalingrad area, visited all three fronts, and gave practical aid to the artillery chiefs of the fronts and armies in planning the artillery support for the offensive. On the Southwestern Front, for example, the command group from Red Army Artillery Headquarters helped the artillery staffs of the fronts and armies organize coordination between artillery and infantry, tanks and air. Every detail of artillery activities was planned, from the commencement of artillery preparation to completion of execution of combat missions by the troops. On the Stalingrad Front considerable attention was devoted to organizing concealed crossing of the Volga by artillery units arriving from Hq SHC Reserve, as well as to redeployment of front artillery to the designated breakthrough sector.

Artillery combat actions in the counteroffensive at Stalingrad were planned and executed, on the largest scale and to the fullest extent up to that time, in conformity with the requirements of the 10 January 1942 Hq SHC directive.

The bulk of artillery in the fronts was utilized for operations in battle groups. A substantial superiority in artillery over the adversary was established in the breakthrough sectors -- 4-5-fold and more. Artillery densities in the breakthrough sectors of the armies ran more than 100 guns, mortars and rocket launcher vehicles per km of breakthrough frontage. The highest density (117 units) was in the 5th Tank Army, and the lowest density (40-50 units) -- in the armies of the Stalingrad Front.⁹

Long-range artillery groups were formed in the armies which were breaking through the enemy's defense on the fronts' main axes of advance, these groups consisting of 3-4 gun artillery regiments, as well as rocket artillery groups

(2-3 or more regiments), while infantry support groups consisting of three or more battalions each were formed in the attack-echelon rifle divisions.

The artillery headquarters staffs of the fronts and armies thoroughly specified artillery missions and modes of accomplishing them during all phases of artillery support for the offensive: during artillery preparation for the assault phase, artillery support of the assault phase, and artillery support of infantry and tanks fighting at depth.

Duration of artillery preparation in the armies of the Southwestern (Lt Gen Arty M. P. Dmitriyev, commanding artillery) and the Don (Lt Gen Arty V. I. Kazakov, commanding artillery) fronts was scheduled for 80 minutes, and 40-75 minutes in the armies of the Stalingrad Front (Maj Gen Arty V. N. Matveyev, commanding artillery). Up to 20 percent of the time was allocated to intense shelling of enemy strongpoints, and 80 percent to accomplishment of fire missions with deliberate fire. Artillery preparation would begin and end with rocket salvos.

Artillery support of the assault phase in all fronts was to be accomplished by the method of successive concentration of fire to the defense depth of forward echelon battalions (to 1.5 km).

The third phase of artillery support for the attack was planned out in detail -- artillery support of infantry and tanks during fighting at depth, which had not been the case during penetration of the defense on the Lama River near Moscow. Artillery provided support to the assaulting troops with concentrated battalion fire, fire by separate batteries and guns on targets impeding the advance of infantry and tanks.

In the counteroffensive at Stalingrad artillery staffs and commanders received their first experience in employment of artillery during engagement of mobile combined units and their actions at operational depth. Support of engagement of mobile task forces of combined-arms armies (tank, mechanized, and cavalry corps) was assigned to those army and division artillery groups in whose zones the mobile combined units were being committed to battle, and the actions of mobile task forces at operational depth -- to corps organic and attached artillery. For example, each tank (1st, 4th, 26th) and mechanized (4th and 13th) corps was reinforced with a tank-destroyer artillery regiment, while cavalry corps (3rd Guards, 4th, 8th) received 1-2 regiments. In addition, almost every corps received a rocket artillery regiment (GMCh regiment) as reinforcement.

And although the counteroffensive by the forces of the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad fronts commenced in exceptionally adverse weather conditions (fog, snowfall, poor visibility), artillery preparation for the assault phase was fairly effective. The enemy defense was hit with fire of a force which the German-fascist troops had never before experienced. The fire delivered by rocket artillery subunits and units was particularly effective. An important role was also played by guns assigned to the direct-fire role. At a range of 300-500 meters with limited visibility, they delivered accurate fire on observed targets on the enemy's main line of resistance. All this enabled artillery successfully to accomplish its tasks -- reliably to suppress a substantial percentage of the enemy's weapons and to ensure infantry and tanks success in the assault.

In the course of the counteroffensive artillery reliably supported the actions of the tank, mechanized and cavalry corps, swiftly and decisively thwarted enemy attempts to halt their rapid advance at operational depth, thus promoting achievement of a high rate of advance.

Combat employment of artillery in mopping up an encircled enemy force experienced further development. A long-range artillery group, consisting of 9 gun and 2 howitzer regiments, was formed in the 65th Army (Col I. S. Beskin, commanding artillery), which was mounting the main attack. For ease of control it was subdivided into three subgroups, each of which operated in the zone of one or two rifle divisions. Artillery division commanders and their staffs were employed to control the long-range artillery subgroups. Here for the first time in the Great Patriotic War artillery support of the infantry and tank assault was conducted by means of a rolling barrage to a depth of 1.5 km. This was possible because the density of artillery had increased in the breakthrough sectors, the character of the enemy's defense had changed (it had become close to a trench defense in structure), and the artillery and combined-arms commanders had acquired the experience necessary for successful control of troops and artillery fire in the course of combat.

One of the characteristic features in artillery actions during this period was flexible redeployments of large masses of artillery in line with the decisions of combined-arms commanders. On 15 January, for example, the commanding general of the Don Front shifted the main attack from the zone of advance of the 65th Army to that of the 21st Army. In conformity with this decision, a large part of the SHC Reserve artillery attached to the front (1st and 4th Artillery divisions, 96th and 756th Howitzer Artillery regiments, 738th Heavy Howitzer Artillery Regiment) was redeployed to a new sector, rapidly and with strict observance of concealment, camouflage and deception.

Artillery, the main source of firepower of ground forces, played an exceptionally important role in the successful conduct of the Stalingrad offensive operation. At all stages of the operation artillery smashed the enemy's defense with its fire, helped repulse enemy counterattacks, and reliably supported the advancing infantry and tanks. In the course of this counteroffensive artillery for the first time executed in full all three phases of artillery support of the attack and acquired initial experience in supporting engagement in a breach and support of actions at depth by mobile combined units. Experience in the combat employment of artillery divisions in the counteroffensive confirmed the expediency of establishing large artillery combined units. Subsequently artillery divisions, and later corps as well constituted that principal means utilizing which Hq SHC executed extensive maneuver of artillery on an operational scale during the course of an operation.

To honor the services of Soviet artillerymen to the homeland, our country began celebrating as Artillery Day, and later, beginning in 1964, as Rocket Forces and Artillery Day, the day on which the historic Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad commenced -- 19 November.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Artilleriya v oboronitel'nykh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Artillery in the Defensive Operations of the Great Patriotic War], Book 1, Voyenizdat, page 328.
2. Ibid., page 402.
3. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Fund 345, List 5487, File 48, pp 180-182.
4. "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynye 1941-1945 gg." [Soviet Artillery in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945], Voyenizdat, 1960, page 153.
5. Ibid., page 155.
6. "Artilleriya...", op. cit., page 386.
7. TsAMO, Fund 345, List 5487, File 48, sheets 182-185.
8. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 6, Voyenizdat, 1976, page 48.
9. Ibid.

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GROUND FORCES

ARMOR AND ARMORED TROOPS IN THE BATTLE FOR STALINGRAD

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 82 (signed to press 25 Oct 82) pp 42-48

[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Hero of the Soviet Union Professor Mar Armored Trps O. Losik, commanding officer, Military Academy of Armored Troops: "First Employment of Armored and Mechanized Troops"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] The Battle of Stalingrad occupies a special place among the outstanding victories won by the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War.

Armored and mechanized troops played an important role in gaining victory at Stalingrad. As we know, a total of 15 tank and mechanized corps as well as dozens of tank brigades and regiments took part just in the offensive operations of this campaign, while the total number of tanks exceeded more than 1400 in our three fronts at the commencement of the counteroffensive. As a result of the massive employment of tanks, the depth and rate of advance of the Soviet forces increased substantially, while their operations began to assume a decisive, mobile character.

Substantial changes took place in the structure of Soviet armored and mechanized troops on the eve of the Battle of Stalingrad. The forming of tank corps began in the spring of 1942, and the first two tank armies (3rd and 5th) were formed in May-June.¹ In composition and function these large strategic formations were reminiscent of the prewar assault armies, which were assigned missions both pertaining to penetrating the enemy's defense and offensive exploitation of tactical into operational success. They normally contained 2 tank corps, from 1 to 3 rifle divisions, 1 or 2 tank brigades, and other units of army subordination. Two additional tank armies of similar composition (1st and 4th) were formed in the course of the defensive battles at Stalingrad.³

Quantitative growth of armored equipment and its qualitative improvement, as well as the forming of tank combined units and large strategic formations provided the capability to establish powerful mobile battle groups both in the defense and offense.

Certain changes also took place in fascist Germany's panzer forces. The Hitlerites began upgrading their T-III and T-IV medium tanks and adopted the new T-VI heavy tank ("Tiger"). New panzer divisions were hastily being formed.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DEFENSIVE OPERATION (17 July 1942) Soviet forces had approximately 400 tanks in the Stalingrad sector, while the adversary had as many as 500. The enemy possessed a superiority in personnel by a factor of 1.7, in tanks and artillery by a factor of 1.3, and had more than twice as many aircraft.⁴ At this time the tank elements of the Stalingrad Front consisted of the 13th, 22nd, 23rd, and 28th Tank Corps, 5 independent tank brigades, and 8 independent tank battalions. Subsequently the 4th, 7th, and 16th Tank Corps were sent to the Stalingrad sector.

The fighting was fierce from the very outset. Soviet troops heroically repulsed the onslaught by the enemy, who was endeavoring to break through to the Volga and capture Stalingrad.

To increase stability of the defense, tank battalions and the majority of tank brigades fought as elements of the rifle combined units of the 62nd and 64th armies. They cemented the infantry dispositions, took active part in joint infantry-tank counterattacks, defended the most important sectors, and covered the withdrawal of friendly troops to new defensive positions.

Tank corps then comprised the nucleus of the newly forming tank armies (1st and 4th) which were to launch a front counterthrust at the enemy in the Kalach area. For example, the 1st Tank Army (Maj Arty K. S. Moskalenko, commanding) contained the 13th and 28th Tank Corps, the 131st Rifle Division, the 158th Tank Brigade, and 5 artillery regiments. The 4th Tank Army (Maj Gen V. D. Kryuchenkin, commanding) contained the 22nd and 23rd Tank Corps, the 18th Rifle Division, the 133rd Tank and 5th Tank-Destroyer Brigade, as well as 3 artillery regiments.⁵

The command authorities of the Stalingrad Front decided to destroy the enemy force which had penetrated the defense of the 62nd Army with these armies attacking in the general direction of Verkhne-Buzinovka, thus restoring the situation. Ground troop operations were to be supported by the 8th Air Army, which totaled 200 aircraft.⁶

The situation demanded a swift counterthrust in order to prevent crossing of the Don. But the tank formations did not have time to concentrate on the right bank of the river. The front command authorities decided to engage the main forces of the tank armies as they approached and deployed. For example, the 1st Tank Army launched the counterthrust on 25 July with the forces of just the 13th Tank Corps. Two days later the 28th Tank Corps was committed to battle. The 23rd Corps, transferred from the 4th Tank Army on 27 July, did not join the counterthrust until 30 July, and then with only one brigade. The 4th Tank Army was not able to move its main forces over to the right bank of the Don until evening on 28 July. It commenced the attack on the following morning.

Unfortunately the tank armies did not succeed in routing the enemy force which was driving toward the Don. Haste in organization and execution of the

counterthrust was evident in their actions, for only a single night had been allocated to preparing the troops, while the corps moved up and crossed the river under enemy air attack. The enemy's attempt to accomplish a hasty crossing of the Don and reach the Volga, however, was thwarted. The enemy's main force took heavy losses and became enmeshed in protracted fighting on the right bank, which lasted approximately a month.

The 13th Tank Corps, which had been redeployed to this axis, took part in repelling the advance of the enemy's southern force, which was operating along the Kotel'nikovskiy-Stalingrad rail line. On 9 August the 64th Army force grouping, supported by the tanks of the 13th Tank Corps, launched a counterthrust at the enemy. The enemy was pushed back to his initial position.

A particularly complex situation developed on 23 August, when combined units of the 14th Panzer Corps of the Hitlerites' 6th Army broke through to the Volga north of Stalingrad and cut the 62nd Army off from the rest of the forces of the Stalingrad Front.

The front's command authorities made several attempts to reestablish the situation of the 62nd Army, mounting counterthrusts at the penetrating enemy force. Tank troops also took active part in all counterthrusts and partial offensive operations. And although there were considerable deficiencies in utilization of tanks (poor reconnaissance, inadequate effectiveness of artillery and air support, uncoordinated engagement of tank combined units), aggressive actions by the Soviet forces significantly weakened the enemy's pressure on the combined units defending Stalingrad.

During the conduct of combat operations within the city, all tank units which were elements of the 62nd Army were incorporated into the overall system of defense. The enemy's advance was stopped through the efforts of fighting men of all combat arms.

By mid-November 1942 the relative strengths had shifted in favor of the Soviet forces. Favorable conditions had been created for them to launch a COUNTER-OFFENSIVE.

The plan of the Soviet command authorities for the counteroffensive at Stalingrad boiled down to encirclement and annihilation of the German-fascist force operating on the Stalingrad axis. A leading role in executing this plan was assigned to armored and mechanized troops. Their forces in the three fronts included the following: the 5th Tank Army, the 4th, 13th and 16th Tank and 4th Mechanized Corps, 12 independent tank brigades, 3 independent tank regiments, and 3 independent tank battalions. A total of 1463 tanks were concentrated by the initiation of the counteroffensive.⁷

The adversary had 3 panzer divisions and 1 motorized division in the zones of advance of the Soviet forces, totaling 675 tanks and assault guns as of 19 November 1942. Soviet forces enjoyed a 2.1-fold superiority over the adversary in armored equipment.⁸

In matters of combat employment of armored and mechanized troops in the counteroffensive, the commanding generals of the fronts and armies took strict guidance

from the 16 October 1942 order issued by the People's Commissar of Defense. Independent tank brigades and regiments were employed on the main axes of advance for direct support of infantry. All tank and mechanized corps were employed as the offensive exploitation echelons of the 5th Tank Army and the combined-arms armies. They were to be committed on the first day of the operation, after infantry and infantry-supporting tanks broke through the enemy's main defensive zone, with the objective of achieving swift offensive exploitation and encircling the enemy's main forces west of Stalingrad.

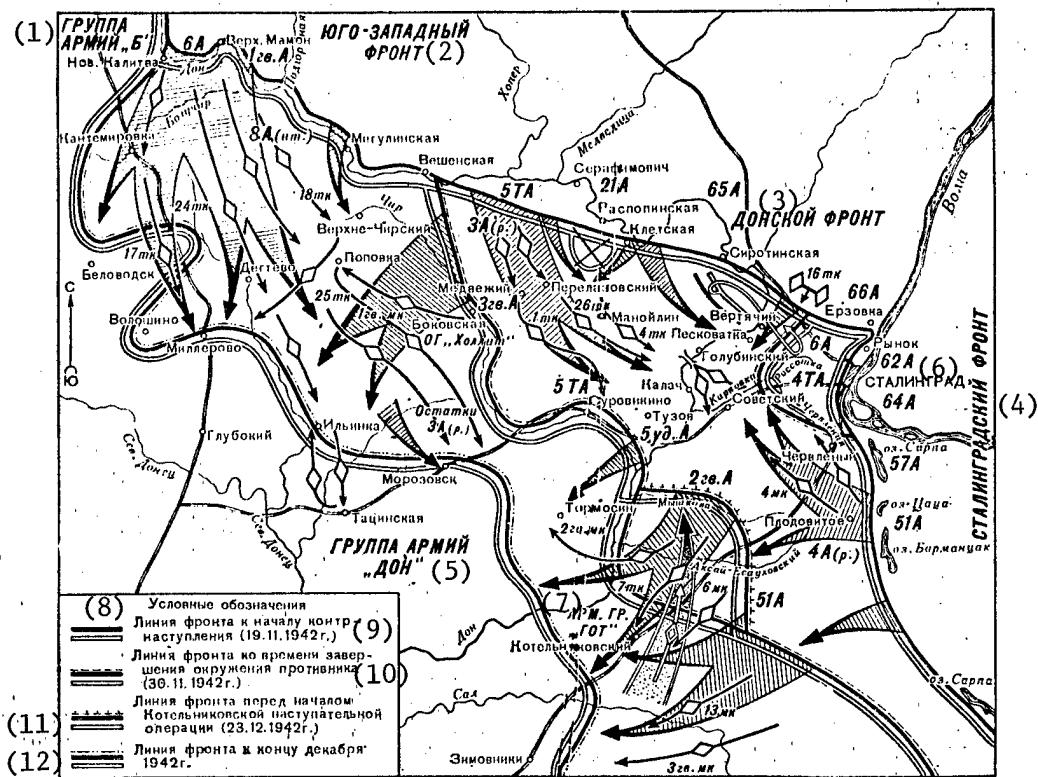
A most important condition for successful accomplishment of the missions assigned to the corps was the prompt and comprehensively supported engagement of these corps. The experience of preceding operations had shown that such measures must be prepared in particular detail. Therefore the headquarters staffs of units and combined units conducted war games on maps and terrain models, headquarters exercises and commander's reconnaissance. Plans of artillery, air and engineer support of engagement were worked out in detail, and teamwork and cooperation was planned out between tank and mechanized corps and the rifle combined units which were penetrating the enemy's defense.

The Soviet forces at Stalingrad were to accomplish three basic objectives in sequence in the course of the counteroffensive: encirclement of the enemy, thwarting of his attempts to relieve the encircled forces, and annihilation of the encircled force. The unique conditions involved in accomplishing each of these missions dictated the necessity of employing various modes of utilization of armored and mechanized troops.

On 19 November 1942, following massive artillery preparation, the troops of the Southwestern Front and the 65th Army of the Don Front launched an offensive. By midday the infantry and infantry-supporting tanks of the 5th Tank and 21st armies of the Southwestern Front had advanced 4-5 km. Their rate of advance had begun to slow. In order to build up efforts to complete breakthrough of the enemy's defense, the 1st, 26th, and 4th Tank Corps were committed; working in coordination with the rifle combined units, they completed breakthrough of the defense and proceeded with offensive exploitation.

On the next day the Stalingrad Front's battle group turned to the offensive. The 13th Tank^{8a} and the 4th Mechanized Corps, which engaged that afternoon, proceeded to exploit tactical into operational success.

The actions of the tank and mechanized corps, which were advancing toward one another, were swift. They were smashing the enemy's reserves while rolling, executing a bold and decisive maneuver, and avoiding being drawn into protracted fighting for strongpoints and centers of resistance. Successful actions by the corps depended to a considerable degree on skilled employment of the leading elements. We can cite as an example the actions of the composite forward detachment of the 26th Tank Corps under the command of Lt Col G. N. Filippov. Having broken through to the Don during the night, the detachment took the enemy by surprise, seized the only river crossing, and was firmly holding it until the main forces arrived. The actions of the men of this detachment are evidence of the increased combat skill and valor of the Soviet tankers. Capture of the crossing site ensured successful crossing of the river by the



Combat Operations of Armored and Mechanized Forces in the Counteroffensive at Stalingrad

Key:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Army Group B | A. Army |
| 2. Southwestern Front | TA. Tank army |
| 3. Don Front | yd. Assault |
| 4. Stalingrad Front | p. Reserve |
| 5. Army Group Don | Mk. Mechanized corps |
| 6. Stalingrad | mk. Tank corps |
| 7. Army group Goth | ГВ. Guards |
| 8. Legend | 10. Battle line at completion of
encirclement of enemy force
(30 November 1942) |
| 9. Battle line at beginning
of counteroffensive (19
November 1942) | 11. Battle line just before com-
mencement of Kotel'nikovskiy
offensive operation (23 December
1942) |
| | 12. Battle line at end of December
1942 |

forces of the 4th and 26th Tank Corps and to a considerable degree helped achieve swift encirclement of the enemy.

On 23 November mobile forces of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts closed the ring of encirclement around a 330,000-man Hitlerite force. This operation demonstrated the capability of tank and mechanized corps successfully to carry out missions of offensive exploitation, developing tactical into operational success, and to conduct combat actions to considerable depth and at a rapid pace, averaging 30-35 km per day, and sometimes as much as 70 km. At the same time one should note that the fact that the 5th Tank Army contained combined units of differing mobility and maneuverability had an adverse effect on organization and execution of teamwork and cooperation, troop control, and logistic support.

At the second stage of the counteroffensive the scale of employment of armored and mechanized troops increased substantially. Five tank corps and 1 mechanized corps had taken part in the encirclement operation, while 5 tank and 4 mechanized corps took part in the offensive operations in December. In these operations large mobile task forces massed more decisively on the main axes of advance. Four tank corps and 1 mechanized corps, as well as several independent brigades and regiments⁹ took part in the offensive operation of the Southwestern Front on the Middle Don. The combat actions of armored and mechanized troops in this operation were marked by a high degree of mobility and considerable depth of objectives. Frequently the advance by tank and mechanized corps took on the character of deep raids behind enemy lines. Instructive in this regard are the actions of the 24th Tank Corps, which was committed into the breach on 19 December. Pursuing the enemy, in five days it fought its way forward approximately 240 kilometers, and on the morning of 24 December captured Tatsinskaya railway station with a surprise assault from three directions. The actions of the corps were so swift and unexpected that the adversary did not even have time to put into the air the aircraft on the ground at an airfield. Tank crews destroyed and disabled more than 300 enemy aircraft, 50 guns, 15 tanks, 73 trucks, killed and wounded more than 3500 officers and men, and captured large quantities of supplies. Gen V. M. Badanov, the corps commander, was the first to be awarded the Order of Suvorov, 2nd Class, for his courage, bravery, and skilled leadership of his troops. A great many officers and men were awarded high government decorations. The corps was redesignated the 2nd Guards Corps and was given the appellation "Tatsinskiy."¹⁰

Employment of tank troops was quite unique in the Kotel'nikovskiy offensive operation of the Stalingrad Front, which was preceded by defensive battles fought by the 51st and 2nd Guards armies. The 7th, 13th Tank and 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps played an important role in fighting the panzer combined units of Army Group Goth. They launched powerful counterthrusts against the penetrating enemy force and fought stubborn defensive engagements jointly with infantry and artillery, cementing their combat formations. A characteristic feature in the combat employment of tank and mechanized corps in this operation was their actions in night conditions. This ensured the element of surprise and provided the opportunity to accomplish major operational objectives during offensive exploitation deep in the enemy's defense.

Since all tank and mechanized corps were operating on the outer front, only 5 tank brigades and 13 tank regiments took part in the operation to destroy the encircled enemy force. Heavy tank breakthrough regiments were used here for the first time. Almost all tank brigades and regiments were attached to combined-arms armies and used for direct support of infantry.

In conclusion we should stress that in the Battle of Stalingrad armored and mechanized troops gained considerable practical experience in the conduct of combat actions both in the defense and offense. The experience of their employment in the Battle of Stalingrad demonstrated quite clearly that in order to increase the combat effectiveness of tanks in the attack, they must be continuously supported by artillery fire. As a consequence of this, rapid development of self-propelled artillery commenced in 1943, artillery based on existing tanks but carrying more powerful guns. Self-propelled artillery units were organizationally included in tank and mechanized corps.

Experience in employing tank troops in the Battle of Stalingrad demonstrated that it is essential to have as elements of armored and mechanized troops armored units and combined units designated for penetration of the enemy defense together with infantry and artillery, as well as large tank combined units and formations for offensive exploitation in army and front offensive operations. Subsequently there was a sharp increase in the number of formed independent tank brigades, regiments, independent heavy tank breakthrough regiments, self-propelled artillery regiments, and their organizational structure was improved.

The fact that the commanding general of a front lacked large mobile elements made it impossible for him aggressively to influence the course of an operation. This sometimes made it necessary to combine at the front level several tank and mechanized corps operating on the same operational axis. But a common command and control agency was needed in order to increase the effectiveness of teamwork and cooperation between these combined units. Therefore tank armies with a new organization were formed in the Soviet Army by the summer of 1943, consisting only of tank and mechanized corps and the requisite reinforcements. Rifle divisions were eliminated as elements of tank armies. From this moment on up to the end of the war, tank armies were a powerful means of strike and maneuver, a clearly-marked front offensive exploitation echelon.

It was also revealed in the course of offensive operations in the winter of 1943 that the organization of tank and mechanized corps required additional improvement. Artillery, mortar, antiaircraft artillery, and combat engineer units as well as other means of reinforcement and support were additionally incorporated as organic elements in order to increase the combat independence of these combined units, especially when fighting at operational depth.

As we know, in the course of the counteroffensive all tank and mechanized corps were used as army mobile task forces. This utilization was warranted in conditions of a shallow depth of operation. At the same time experience indicated that an absence of strong front mobile task forces made it impossible to turn encirclement and annihilation of the enemy into a continuous process. It was necessary to mount successive operations to accomplish these tasks.

An important role in actions at operational depth was played by forward detachments, which mounted raids deep behind enemy lines, captured road junctions and river crossings, and prevented the enemy from digging in on advantageous lines. Determined actions and initiative by forward detachments and execution of bold maneuver by tank units and combined units were extensively employed in subsequent operations of the past war and have retained their significance in present-day conditions.

In the course of the counteroffensive the command personnel of tank and mechanized corps acquired practical experience in their command and control during actions at operational depth. It constituted a basis for further improving the combat skill of Soviet tankers. Many corps and brigade commanders who took part in the Battle of Stalingrad later successfully led large tank formations. They include P. A. Rotmistrov, A. G. Kravchenko, V. M. Badanov, S. I. Bogdanov, V. T. Vol'skiy, and others.

Soviet tankers, just as the fighting men of other combat arms, displayed courage and mass heroism in this campaign, demonstrating outstanding examples of combat skill. New combined units were added to the Soviet tank guard. For the first time in the Great Patriotic War, 5 tank and 3 mechanized corps were awarded honorary designations: Tatsinskiy, Stalingradskiy, Donskoy, Zimovnikovskiy, Kantemirovskiy, and Kotel'nikovskiy.

The experience of the Battle of Stalingrad remains as a priceless contribution to the heroic history of the Soviet tank troops.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Stroitel'stvo i boyevoye primeneniye sovetskikh tankovykh voysk v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Organizational Development and Combat Employment of Soviet Tank Troops in the Years of the Great Patriotic War], Voyenizdat, 1979, page 54.
2. Footnote omitted.
3. Ibid.
4. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 5, Voyenizdat, 1975, page 158.
5. "Sovetskiye tankovyye voyska 1941-1945" [Soviet Tank Troops, 1941-1945], Voyenizdat, 1973, page 70.
6. "Istoriya...," op. cit., page 159.
7. Ibid., Vol 6, page 45.
8. Ibid.

8a. It is indicated on the map as the 13th Mechanized Corps, since at that time it was maintained at the tables of organization and equipment of a mechanized corps.

9. "Sovetskiye..." op. cit., page 86.

10. "Istoriya..." op. cit., Vol 6, page 71.

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AIR DEFENSE TROOPS

AIR DEFENSE OF STALINGRAD

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[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union Col Gen S. Romanov, chief of the Air Defense Forces Main Staff: "National Air Defense Forces"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] At the beginning of the Battle of Stalingrad the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region (Col Ye. A. Raynin, commanding) and its operationally subordinate 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division (Col I. I. Krasnoyurchenko, commanding; from October 1942 -- Col I. G. Puntus) had 60 fighters, 566 medium and small-caliber antiaircraft guns, 470 antiaircraft machineguns, 6 antiaircraft armored trains, 165 searchlight stations, 81 barrage balloon posts, 3 radar stations, and 6 independent VNOS [Aircraft-Warning Service] battalions.¹ The air defense region units were assigned 50 76 mm field guns, which were organized into 13 batteries, as well as 220 antitank rifles to beef up antitank defense of antiaircraft artillery positions.

Air defense at Stalingrad was based on the principle of establishment of a 360° zoned defense disposed in depth. The total depth of the air defense zone at the beginning of the enemy offensive ran 200-250 km, which made it possible to detect and meet hostile aircraft with fighter forces on the far approaches to the city. In order to ensure a buildup of air defense forces on the routes employed by enemy aircraft, 3 fighter regiments were deployed at airfields 150-180 km west and southwest of Stalingrad (Morozovsk, Kotel'nikovskiy). Two regiments covered the near approaches, deployed at Voroponovo and Beketovka airfields. As the enemy advanced toward Stalingrad, the fighter regiments were redeployed from Morozovsk and Kotel'nikovskiy airfields to the near approaches to the airfields at Gumrak and the settlement of Traktornyy.

The immediate approaches to Stalingrad were defended by medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery. The main body of artillery was deployed on the right bank of the Volga. The depth of the area under fire ran 18 km to the north, northwest, and west, and 8-12 km to the southwest and south. Seven combat sectors were established to improve antiaircraft fire control. Each sector was defended by a medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery regiment, and some sectors were reinforced by independent medium-caliber battalions. Small-caliber antiaircraft artillery and antiaircraft machineguns were used to beef up defense of industrial

plants (Stalingrad Tractor Plant, Barrikady, Krasnyy Oktyabr'), the Stalingrad GRES [State Regional Electric Power Plant], oil terminals, as well as medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery dispositions, fighter airfields, and other important installations outside the city. The antiaircraft armored trains moved along the sections of rail line between Povorino and Stalingrad. A searchlight illumination zone was established around the city to support antiaircraft artillery fire during hours of darkness. Searchlight illumination fields to support night fighter actions were usually not established during daylight hours because of a shortage of searchlights and hostile air activities. Barrage balloons were used to beef up the defense of certain important targets: the city's industrial area, the Stalingrad GRES, and industrial plants in Beketovka and Krasnoarmeysk.

A network of VNOS posts was set up to spot hostile aircraft and to sound the alert, sited for the most part west of the Volga, extending to an outer limit of 200-250 km. The three available radar stations were deployed 60-80 km to the west and southwest of Stalingrad. As a rule, initially they were used to detect hostile aircraft, and from the end of August 1942 to vector fighters as well.

Control of air defense units was handled for the most part in a centralized manner, from the command post of the air defense corps region commander. The practice of establishing command groups was extensively followed from the commencement of combat operations on the immediate approaches to and within the city, in order to ensure reliable control of independent antiaircraft artillery groups. Usually they were headed by air defense region headquarters staff officers, as well as by commanders of antiaircraft artillery regiments or their deputies. Whenever necessary, the air defense region command authorities would send out their representatives to the command groups to allocate tasks and handle the basic matter of organizing air defense on the spot. Liaison officers were assigned from air defense units to air defense region headquarters.

A plan for coordination of corps region manpower and resources was drawn up in advance and communicated to all coordinating units. Coordination between the air defense corps region and the fighter aviation of the air armies and tactical air defense of the fronts called for organization of a unified VNOS system, mutual warning of hostile air activities and activities of friendly units, coordinated disposition of antiaircraft artillery forces to protect ground forces dispositions and installations in the front's rear area, and distribution of missions in combat against hostile ground forces. As the battle line approached Stalingrad, all air defense assets of the fronts and air defense region operated in a single zone on the basis of unified plans, performing common combat missions. In connection with this, effective 16 August 1942 Headquarters, Supreme High Command [Hq SHC] temporarily placed the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region under the commanding general of the Southeastern Front.

COMBAT OPERATIONS OF AIR DEFENSE FORCES IN THE DEFENSIVE PHASE. Air support of the German 6th Army on the Stalingrad axis, which had the mission of capturing Stalingrad, was assigned to the 4th Air Force, which totaled up to 1200 combat aircraft at the commencement of fighting on the far approaches to the city (as of 17 July 1942).² The Hitlerites threw their finest air squadrons into

the fighting at Stalingrad; these squadrons were equipped with aircraft of the new types and aircrews which had already amassed certain combat experience.

Throughout the entire defensive phase enemy air activities were aggressive. Suffice it to say that within the boundaries of the Stalingrad Air Defense Region on the average 600-800 aircraft passages were noted daily in August-October 1942,³ while the total during the defensive period exceeded 60,000. These activities commenced in the early days of July 1942 with regular reconnaissance of the Likhaya-Stalingrad and Povorino-Stalingrad stretches of rail line. On succeeding days, as enemy forces picked up the pace of offensive fighting in the great bend of the Don, the number of overflights increased sharply. By evening on 22 July, when enemy ground forces reached the forward edge of the main defensive zone of the Stalingrad Front, the depth of the air defense zone had been reduced by half and did not exceed 120 km. The enemy began flying raids on Stalingrad at the end of July. The first of these were flown at night, in groups of from 20 to 45 aircraft flying at altitudes of 2000-5000 meters. Stalingrad's air defense forces repulsed the enemy air attack in an organized fashion. Only isolated aircraft managed to penetrate through to the city, releasing bombs in an irregular fashion, which caused no great damage to military-industrial installations.

As the German-fascist forces continued to advance toward Stalingrad, combat conditions were becoming increasingly more difficult for the troops of the Stalingrad Air Defense Region. The adversary, who had redeployed a large part of his aircraft to forward airfields, began flying several raids a day on the city, employing fighters to escort bombers and to seal off our airfields. At the same time the depth of the VNOS system on the approaches to Stalingrad from the west had diminished to 50 km and less, and when the enemy reached the outskirts of town it was necessary to site the VNOS posts directly in the city, on the roofs of tall buildings. Fighter regiments were redeployed to airfields on the east bank of the Volga. In connection with this, radars were deployed close to the fighter regiment command posts, and it was now possible to use them for vectoring fighters, which in turn increased the effectiveness of combat actions.

An enemy air raid on 23 August 1942 was one of the heaviest. It involved several hundred enemy aircraft, that is, almost the entire forces of the enemy's 4th Air Force. By nightfall enemy aircraft had flown approximately 2000 aircraft-overflights. The Hitlerites were seeking to drown Stalingrad in blood, to provoke panic among the civilian population, and to disrupt troop control. But the staunchness of the city's defenders, including air defense personnel, foiled the enemy's plans. In repelling this attack, 120 fascist aircraft were shot down by the fighters of the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division and by anti-aircraft artillery of the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region, together with fighters of the 8th Air Army and the tactical air defense of the fronts.⁴

Massive raids on Stalingrad continued up to mid-November 1942. In addition to the city, the enemy bombed the docks and Volga crossings at Stalingrad, Kamyshin and Astrakhan, airfields, antiaircraft artillery positions, troop dispositions and front reserves.

The principal mission of the troops of the Stalingrad Air Defense Region in the defensive period consisted in reliable air defense of industrial installations, rail lines and water lines of communication within the established boundaries. From the end of September 1942 the troops of the air defense region, together with front fighter aviation, provided air defense protection for the main forces of the 62nd Army, which was fighting in the city proper, the Volga crossings at Stalingrad and south of the city, as well as the front's artillery force on the left bank of the Volga.

Of particular importance in this period was reliable protection against air attack of the Volga waterway -- one of the most important lines of communication supplying our fronts at Stalingrad and handling the transport of refined petroleum products from Baku to the country's central regions, as well as defense of rail lines running to Stalingrad and the concentration areas for strategic reserves being moved into the Stalingrad sector. More than 300 antiaircraft guns and machineguns were mounted on the docks and on various vessels (steamboats, towboats, barges, etc).⁵ The Volga Air Defense Command Group was formed to direct antiaircraft units and subunits.

Troops of the Stalingrad, Astrakhan, Voronezh-Borisoglebsk, Saratov-Balashov and Penza air defense regions were brought in to provide air defense along rail lines on the southwestern axis. These combined units assigned 70 fighters, 570 antiaircraft guns, 226 machineguns, and 59 searchlights to protect main rail lines.⁶ Antiaircraft artillery maneuver groups were widely employed in organizing protection of trains en route. Weapons included small-caliber antiaircraft guns and antiaircraft machineguns. In addition, antiaircraft armored trains were operating on the rail lines. The troops of the above-listed air defense regions successfully carried out their assigned missions, downing approximately 150 fascist aircraft.⁷

In addition to repelling mass air raids on Stalingrad and front installations, the forces of the Stalingrad Air Defense Region at the same time engaged enemy tanks and infantry. Typical was the engagement fought on 23 August 1942 by the antiaircraft gunners of the 1077th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment under the command of Lt Col V. Ye. German against enemy tanks and infantry on the northern approaches to Stalingrad. The appearance of Hitlerites in that sector was considered little probable, and therefore we had no ground troops there. The antiaircraft gunners found themselves facing a substantial force of enemy tanks and motorized infantry. For 2 days they waged a stubborn fight without support by friendly ground troops. These engagements played an important role in beating back the enemy's first attempt to penetrate into the city without a halt to deploy and gave the Soviet command the time and opportunity to bring in requisite forces from the north to bolster the defense. The courageous soldiers destroyed and disabled 83 tanks and 15 infantry-carrying trucks, destroyed more than 3 battalions of submachinegunners, and brought down 14 enemy aircraft.⁸

In the period of the fighting for control of the city proper in September-November 1942, the most intensive fighting was done by the antiaircraft gunners of the 1087th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment (Lt Col G. I. Yershov, commanding), which was protecting the troops of the 62nd Army.

More than 100 platoons armed with submachineguns, antitank rifles, grenades and Molotov cocktails were formed to provide immediate protection of the dispositions of antiaircraft artillery units during the defensive phase, using personnel from these units. They would be deployed 100-300 meters from the antiaircraft battery positions, in the most probable directions of hostile ground threat.⁹

MSU A. I. Yeremenko, who at that time commanded the forces of the Stalingrad Front, voiced deserved praise for the antiaircraft gunners of the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region: "The antiaircraft gunners who were defending the city... took the first blow on themselves... stood firm in that inferno, fought off the first terrible onslaught, and gained precious time -- we were able to move up troops."¹⁰

IN THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE, the National Air Defense Forces, in coordination with the fighter aviation of the air armies and tactical air defense of the fronts, provided reliable air cover for the strategic reserves concentration areas and redeployments of the fronts' forces. Just as in the defensive phase, in addition to the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region, the troops of the Voronezh-Borisoglebsk, Saratov-Balashov, Penza, and Astrakhan air defense regions were enlisted to perform this task. The Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region had been greatly reinforced in advance, in August 1942. In particular, three fighter regiments and a number of antiaircraft artillery units were transferred from the Moscow Air Defense Front.

DURING THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE AT STALINGRAD, air defense forces provided air cover to the troop dispositions of the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad fronts, protected their lines of communication and installations in the front's rear areas, and also took part in sealing off the encircled enemy force.

Combat against enemy aircraft, chiefly transports and bombers, was conducted in four zones.

Combined units of the 8th and 17th Air armies and long-range bombers operated in the FIRST ZONE, beyond the outer perimeter of encirclement. They flew bombing attacks on enemy airfields.

A second and third zones were set up between the outer and inner perimeters of encirclement. The SECOND ZONE was divided into five sectors. One front fighter division operated in each of four sectors, while the fifth was assigned to the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division. The radar stations of the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region were used for vectoring fighters.

IN THE THIRD ZONE enemy aircraft were brought down by antiaircraft artillery and antiaircraft machinegun fire. It was directly adjacent to the noose of encirclement and was set up to a depth of 8-10 km. There were substantial forces in this zone as of 20 December 1942 -- 395 medium-caliber and small-caliber antiaircraft guns, and 241 antiaircraft machineguns.¹¹ A unified force grouping was established to achieve more efficient utilization of these resources, which belonged to the Don Front and the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region, with antiaircraft artillery units of the air defense region incorporated into antiaircraft artillery groups of combined-arms armies.

The FOURTH ZONE encompassed the enemy force encirclement area proper. Within this zone transport aircraft were destroyed both in the air and on the ground, at airfields and landing strips. These missions were performed by part of the forces of the 8th and 16th Air armies and a fighter regiment of the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division. Air defense regiment night fighters prevented the enemy from dropping supplies in by parachute. Po-2 light bombers operated aggressively against enemy airfields during hours of darkness. Field artillery was used to good effect, shelling enemy aircraft on the ground at airfields and landing strips.

The main result of the combat activities of the National Air Defense Forces in the Battle of Stalingrad was the fact that these forces, together with the fighter aviation of the fronts and tactical air defense, in conditions of German-fascist air supremacy and in close contact with hostile ground forces, were able successfully to repulse numerous enemy air attacks and helped our forces defend Stalingrad and subsequently crush the enemy on the Stalingrad axis. From July through December 1942 units of the Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region and the 102nd Fighter Division (subsequently the 2nd Guards Air Division) destroyed 699 aircraft and 173 tanks and neutralized approximately 50 artillery and mortar batteries.¹²

The homeland greatly appreciated the contribution by the National Air Defense Forces toward achieving victory over the enemy. The Stalingrad Air Defense Corps Region and the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division were awarded the Order of the Red Banner. In addition, the 102nd Air Defense Fighter Division and the 1087th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment were given the guards appellation. The combat exploits of air defense personnel were honored with USSR decorations and medals, and pilots V. I. Bashkirov, G. K. Gul'tyayev, Ye. A. Yevseyev, N. A. Kozlov, V. P. Smirnov, N. I. Stolyarov, and F. F. Fedorov were awarded the lofty title Hero of the Soviet Union.

The experience of the air defense of Stalingrad confirmed the correctness of the basic principles of organization of air defense of our country's major urban centers and industrial areas which had been formulated in the prewar period, were tested in the battle of Moscow and Leningrad, and which experienced further development in the Battle of Stalingrad. Massive enemy air operations were countered with actions, coordinated in objective, time and space, by substantial forces of the National Air Defense Forces, tactical air defense and fighter aviation of the air armies.

Successful employment of considerable air defense forces and assets in defending Stalingrad, the troop dispositions of the fronts and installations in the fronts' rear areas, as well as strategic reserves concentration areas, the Volga waterway and rail lines of communication, for the protection of which the forces of several operational-tactical air defense combined units were enlisted, became possible due to centralized control by the commander of the National Air Defense Forces. Maneuver of air defense forces and assets was widely utilized.

Precision teamwork and coordination between National Air Defense Forces units and the forces of the fronts was organized in the Battle of Stalingrad.

It was reflected in a number of planning documents, the most important of which were the planning table and instructions on ensuring coordination of National Air Defense units with front-line air defense and the Volga Naval Flotilla.

A new form of operational employment of the National Air Defense Forces was their active participation in sealing off a large encircled enemy force from the air.

The National Air Defense Forces and front-line air defense troops made a significant contribution toward gaining operational air superiority by the Soviet Air Force at the commencement of the Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad. This once again persuasively confirms the need for combined employment and utilization of the capabilities of all combat arms and branches of service in accomplishing such an important task.

Characteristic features were revealed in the employment of air defense forces at Stalingrad, features connected with the fact that from September through November 1942 they were compelled to engage hostile air and ground forces while frequently deployed within the dispositions of the defending troops.

Frequently employed in fighter combat utilization was the method of patrolling fighters on the approaches to and above the city, subsequently building up fighter forces with subunits on ground ready alert at airfields. Antiaircraft artillery shifted from 360° defense of the entire city to the forming of anti-aircraft artillery groups for antiaircraft defense of the city's most important districts and installations. The operations of all air defense forces and assets in a single zone made it necessary to alter the procedure of coordination among the principal arms of the National Air Defense Forces -- fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery. The experience obtained at Leningrad and Moscow was extensively utilized.

Alongside centralized troop control, command groups were set up, which were assigned the task of controlling separated force groupings which were defending important military-industrial installations, Volga docks, principal rail yard facilities and stretches of track along the Ryazan-Ural Railroad.

Antiaircraft armored trains were extensively employed for the first time, to protect the Stalingrad-Povorino, Astrakhan-Zaplavnoye and V. Baskunchak-Saratov rail lines.

In view of the limited depth of the air defense zone, an exceptionally important role was played by radars. They increased the range of detection of hostile aircraft and helped achieve more efficient utilization of air defense manpower and equipment, especially fighter aircraft.

The experience obtained in air defense during the Battle of Stalingrad has retained its significance up to the present day. But it should be applied taking into account the continuously occurring changes in offensive air weapons and means of defense against them.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 7, Voyenizdat, 1979, page 522; TsAMO [Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense], Fund 72, List 12310, File 392, Sheet 91.
2. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 5, Voyenizdat, 1975, page 158.
3. TsAMO, Fund 72, List 12310, File 392, Sheet 113; Fund 9th Air Defense Corps, List 210623, File 1, sheets 3-8, 112 - 115.
4. "Istoriya...," op. cit., page 174.
5. TsAMO, Fund 72, List 12310. File 392, Sheet 95.
6. Ibid., List 561036, File 1, sheets 55, 56.
7. N. A. Svetlishin, "Voyska PVO strany v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе. Voprosy operativno-strategicheskogo primeneniya" [National Air Defense Forces in the Great Patriotic War. Operational-Strategic Utilization], Moscow, Nauka, 1979, page 115.
8. TsAMO, Fund 9th Air Defense Corps, List 200623, File 1, sheets 3, 6, 8, 46.
9. TsAMO, Fund 72, List 12310, File 302, Sheet 98.
10. VESTNIK PVO, No 1, 1968, page 85.
11. TsAMO, Fund 206, List 278, File 17, sheets 267, 292.
12. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya," op. cit., Vol 7, page 522; TsAMO, Fund 9th Air Defense Corps, List 217223, File 10, Sheet 13.

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NAVAL FORCES

VOLGA FLOTILLA OPERATIONS AT STALINGRAD

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[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Capt 1st Rank B. Bannikov: "The Volga Naval Flotilla"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] The Volga Naval Flotilla was formed on 28 October 1941, with a training detachment of Volga River naval vessels, headquartered at Ulyanovsk. Vessels included gunboats, minesweeper patrol boats, minesweeping barges, floating batteries, fast launches and other modified and refitted mobilized river fleet vessels, as well as specially-built armored launches.¹ From the date of its initial organization to the moment it was placed on operational status (25 July 1942), the flotilla trained personnel for the ships and units of the fleets and flotillas, modified and refitted river vessels for use in specific river and lake basins.

On 14 July 1942 the People's Commissar of the Navy gave instructions to the flotilla commander to concentrate its main efforts along the stretch from Saratov to Stalingrad. Volga Naval Flotilla commander Rear Adm D. D. Rogachev, flotilla political department chief Division Commissar P. I. Bel'skiy, and chief of staff Capt 1st Rank M. I. Fedorov arrived in Stalingrad on 19 July with a command group of staff and political department officers to organize joint combat operations of flotilla forces with the troops of the Stalingrad Front. The commanding general of the Stalingrad Front, to whom the flotilla was made operationally subordinate, assigned it the following missions: forces afloat were to be in readiness to give artillery support to ground forces conducting defensive operations; it was to provide reliable ferrying of troops and military supplies across the Volga in the tactical area of operations and to provide military and nonmilitary transport operations along the river; it was to prevent the enemy from crossing over to the left bank; it was to provide defense of flotilla bases; it was to combat hostile mine activities; it was to oversee operation of the river ports of Astrakhan, Stalingrad, Kamyshin, Saratov, and others.²

By 23 August the flotilla's combined units, units and vessels had completed operational deployment and had concentrated at the designated locations in order to carry out the assigned missions.

The 1st River Brigade (the gunboats "Gromov," "Usyskin," and "Rudnev," 6 armored launches, and 2 floating batteries), under the command of Rear Adm S. M. Vorob'yev, made operationally subordinate to the commanding general of the 64th Army, took up its firing positions along the stretch of river between Krasnoarmeysk and Svetlyy Yar. The 2nd River Brigade (the gunboats "Chapayev," "Kirov," "Fedoseyenko," and "Shchors," and 4 armored launches), under the command of Rear Adm T. A. Novikov, operationally subordinate to the commanding general of the 57th Army, was operating from fire positions along the stretch of river between Stalingrad and Krasnoarmeysk.³

The northern group of forces afloat, which effective 1 November 1942 was designated the Stalingrad task group, under the command of Capt-Lt S. P. Lysenko (2 gunboats, 7 armored launches), took up firing positions on the Akhtuba River and operated jointly with the forces of the 62nd Army.

The independent minesweeping brigade was of variable and changing composition. It included armored launches, minesweeping launches, plus other vessels, and up to 28 September was subordinate to the chief of engineer troops of the Southeastern, and subsequently of the Stalingrad Front. This brigade supported crossing operations and transported troops and various supplies within Stalingrad city limits and south of town.

The 680th Railway Artillery Brigade took up firing positions within the city and was operationally subordinate to the commander of artillery of the 62nd Army.

The 3rd River Brigade was completing the process of forming in Saratov (12 gunboats, 9 armored launches, 5 floating antiaircraft batteries, 4 patrol craft). The brigade was assigned to ensure uninterrupted transport operations along the stretch of river from Kamyshin to Saratov.

By the latter half of August fighting had reached the close approaches to Stalingrad. On 23 August the enemy succeeded in breaking through to the Volga north of town. From this time on gunboats, armored launches and other vessels armed with artillery joined the fight against the Hitlerites in an area within the range of shipboard guns. They were regularly called upon to provide ARTILLERY SUPPORT OF GROUND TROOPS throughout the entire Stalingrad battle. Promptness in commencing fire and effectiveness of fire were achieved by having vessels take up and change fire positions as a rule in advance, during hours of darkness, when the enemy usually was inactive, observing secrecy, concealment and camouflage. Officers, petty officers and enlisted personnel from the ships' companies were assigned to act as artillery observers. They stayed with the dispositions of the ground forces divisions and maintained communications with their ships. The flotilla's flagship artillery officer was in continuous contact with the artillery commanders of the 62nd, 64th, 57th armies and the front. The flotilla's flagship command post was located close to the command center of the Stalingrad Front. Flotilla brigade command posts were sited near the command posts of the armies to which they were subordinate. Fire would be delivered on request by combined-arms commanders. The shipboard artillery control system was stable. This made it possible not only to deliver massive fire but also to deliver fire by groups of vessels, separate vessels, and floating batteries.

In the period from 23 to 31 August the vessels of the flotilla's Northern Group regularly provided artillery support to ground troops advancing northward from the Rynok-Orlovka area and from Yerzovka southward, with the objective of destroying units of the enemy's 14th Panzer Corps which had broken through to the Volga. In addition, on the evening of 23 August a naval infantry battalion was delivered to the vicinity of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant; beginning on 25 August this battalion, supported by the artillery of the vessels of the Northern Group, repeatedly counterattacked the enemy in the Rynok area, and on 27 August captured this community, but was unable to hold it due to insufficient numerical strength. In eight days of fighting the enemy sustained considerable losses and was forced to cease his attacks.

From 1 through 13 September the vessels of the Northern Group regularly provided supporting fire to the troops of the 62nd Army. On 10 September, for example, German-fascist troops broke through to the Volga near the village of Kuporosnoye. In order to dislodge the enemy from this village the 126th Rifle Division, supported by artillery fire from the gunboats and armored launches of the 1st River Brigade, launched an attack. As a result of coordinated actions, our troops succeeded in liberating Kuporosnoye. The men of the gunboat "Gromov" distinguished themselves in this engagement.⁴

Armored launches made frequent forays on the enemy's riverbank flanks, thwarting his assaults with fire. In the latter half of September an enemy 120 mm battery was operating north of the city, inflicting heavy casualties on our troops. The mission of destroying it was assigned to the gunboat "Usyskin." On 25 September a naval artillery observation post, moved up to the front line of our defensive positions, precisely determined the coordinates of this battery, which was well concealed by terrain irregularities. It was destroyed. The ship's war diary contained the following entry: "A 120 mm German battery was neutralized with 5 salvos. Thanks go to all personnel.... Col Gen A. I. Yeremenko."⁵

We should make particular mention of the effectiveness of artillery support. It was distinguished by promptness in executing requests for fire from subunits on the front line and by swiftness in straddling targets. Thanks to the presence of artillery observation posts and good communications with the ships, fire would commence 10-15 minutes after a request was received. Powerful and accurate at critical moments in the fighting, it helped the ground troops thwart enemy assaults and inflicted considerable damage on the adversary.

The performance of the enlisted personnel, petty officers and officers was highly praised by the commanding general of the 57th Army, Maj Gen F. I. Tolbukhin, who noted in an order dated 1 November 1942 that from 30 August through 31 October 1942 the men of the 2nd River Brigade had displayed in fierce fighting a high degree of proficiency, staunchness and total dedication to the socialist homeland. There was continuous coordination between ships and infantry during the operation; as a result the missions of the combined-arms commanders were carried out promptly and with precision. Thanks to the excellent job done by the gunboat crews and the heroism displayed by them, the enemy's attempts to break through to the town of Krasnoarmeysk were repulsed with heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy.⁶

As the winter freezing of the river approached, on 31 October the State Defense Committee decided to rebase the ships of the 1st and 2nd brigades to Astrakhan and Gurev for the winter, for maintenance and repairs. The Stalingrad task group was left behind to provide artillery support to ground troops. It operated up to the end of the Battle of Stalingrad. In spite of heavy ice on the river, the ships' crews kept their ships continuously on station, from which they delivered most effective fire on the enemy.

SECURING OF VOLGA CROSSING SITES was of great importance for successful defensive operations. When the Hitlerites reached the Volga to the north and south of Stalingrad and during the fighting in the city, the pontoon bridges in operation were constantly subjected to hostile airstrikes and artillery fire. Organization of uninterrupted operation of these crossings required joint efforts by engineer troops, flotilla forces, vessels of the river fleet, and air defense forces. Toward this end the front's military council on 30 August ordered the establishment of five crossing sectors and assigned personnel to be responsible for their functioning.

The crossings operated for the most part without interruption up to mid-September. When the Hitlerites captured important high ground in the downtown part of the city on 13-14 September, however, and reached Solyanaya landing from the south, the entire stretch of water at Stalingrad was within range of hostile artillery fire. Minesweeper-launches which were hauling supplies began taking losses. Minesweepers and armored launches began to be extensively enlisted to provide fast and reliable hauling of badly-needed supplies and personnel. On 14-15 September, for example, flotilla ships transported to the city urgently needed units of the 13th Guards Rifle Division under the command of Maj Gen A. I. Rodimtsev, which immediately joined the fighting for the central part of the city and on 16 September dislodged the enemy from Mamaia Hill.

Armored launches would escort minesweepers along the entire journey. Their artillery would immediately open fire on enemy batteries attempting to sink the vessels carrying supplies. Minesweepers and armored launches had to work around the clock. The intensity of the operations of the flotilla's vessels in keeping supplies moving across the Volga is attested by a report submitted by the commissar of the central crossing, senior political officer Gezhenko, dated 1 October 1942. In this report he stated that from 15 through 25 September 12 minesweeper-launches were operating on the crossing. In spite of incessant heavy enemy fire, the launches continued running across between the right and left banks of the Volga. During this time minesweepers carried across more than 10,000 men in subunit elements, approximately 5000 wounded personnel, and more than 1000 tons of supplies.⁷

From the latter half of October to the beginning of the counteroffensive, as many as 20 armored launches were operating on the Volga crossings. Each run took from 6 to 8 hours instead of 1 hour. The launches frequently had to break up the ice to open routes and lay smoke to avoid aimed artillery fire and bombing attacks.

In the course of the defensive fighting in the city, some units and subunits became cut off from the main forces. The 1st Armored Launch Detachment and the 1st River Brigade brought them supplies and evacuated wounded.

During the Battle of Stalingrad the flotilla's ships made 35,400 runs across the Volga, transporting a total of 122,418 men, 627 trucks and wagons, 1925 cases of mortar rounds, 13 guns, 138 machineguns, mortars and antitank rifles, and more than 4000 tons of other military supplies.⁸

MSU V. I. Chuikov, who was in command of the 62nd Army during the Battle of Stalingrad, wrote that "the men of the Volga Flotilla gave inestimable aid to the army.... Every run across the Volga involved great risk.... About the role of the men of the flotilla and their exploits, I shall state briefly: if it had not been for them, the 62nd Army could have been wiped out, without ammunition and without provisions, and would have failed to carry out its mission."⁹

Performing the mission of ANTIMINE AND ANTIAIR DEFENSE OF THE VOLGA WATERWAY IN 1942-1943, the flotilla was a large factor in providing uninterrupted supply to the army in the field and the nation's economy of fuel, arms, foodstuffs and other supplies which were transported on the Volga.

The German-fascist command authorities were aware of the importance of this main transport artery and endeavored to put it out of commission, to disrupt the movement of transport vessels along the river. Enemy air activities against the Volga waterway began during the night of 22-23 July 1942, when German-fascist forces reached the great bend of the Don. In the period from 22 July to 2 August Hitlerite aircraft regularly planted mines north and south of Stalingrad. The fascists laid approximately 350 mines on the Volga in 1942 up to the time the river froze over.¹⁰ These mines carried highly-sensitive magnetic and acoustic firing mechanisms.

Minelaying activities and airstrikes against transport vessels presented a considerable hazard to uninterrupted traffic along the Volga. Cargo-laden vessels were going down with increasing frequency. The People's Commissariat of the River Fleet, top officials and dispatchers of steamship companies, ports and dock facilities essentially shut down river traffic on the north and south approaches to Stalingrad from 22 through 25 July due to the danger of detonating mines; this resulted in the gathering of a large number of unprotected transport vessels, which presented a target for enemy aircraft.

On 29 July 1942 the military council of the Stalingrad Front placed the Lower Volga Steamship Company under the commander of the Volga Flotilla as regards organization of river fleet traffic along the Volga. Responsibility for spotting mines in channels and destroying them was assigned to the commander of the Volga Flotilla; he was also empowered to open and shut down channels and to specify routes and rates of movement for river fleet vessels.¹¹

In executing the decision of the front's military council, the flotilla's command authorities became closely involved in regulating vessel traffic. Experienced officers, sent to vessel massing areas, took vigorous measures to

disperse vessels, to find detour channels and to maintain uninterrupted traffic.

In order to ensure uninterrupted river traffic, the stretch of river running from Saratov to Zamyany (72 km north of Astrakhan) was divided into five sections. The minesweepers of an independent minesweeping brigade assisted navigation in these sections (a division was assigned to each section). They conducted continuous mining reconnaissance, swept and destroyed spotted mines, organized safe escort of convoys and individual cargo vessels, monitored camouflage and concealment of river fleet vessels, protected military crossing sites from floating mines, prevented large numbers of vessels from massing in their sections, and checked accuracy of marking of mine clusters.

In addition to sweeping channels, armored launches and in certain instances gunboats of the 1st and 2nd River brigades convoyed vessels carrying the most valuable cargoes along the most hazardous stretch, from Krasnyy Yar to Zamyany. In addition, steamships and towboats were armed with antiaircraft guns and machineguns to engage aircraft, and were also supplied with smoke generating equipment and smoke pots. Seventy officers and 258 petty officers and enlisted men were detached from the flotilla to operate antiaircraft guns and machineguns mounted on cargo vessels and towboats. Degaussing was performed on metal-hulled vessels.

Organization of mooring locations along the Volga was of great importance for eliminating losses of cargo vessels. These locations were protected by anti-aircraft artillery and fighter aircraft. They were well concealed and camouflaged. Vessels would wait there for enemy air attacks to cease and for sweeping of channels to be completed.

Local party and soviet agencies took part in combating the mine threat, mobilizing the local populace to spot mines dropped by enemy aircraft.

Thus fine examples of coordination between ground forces, air forces and the river flotilla were demonstrated in the Battle of Stalingrad, which ensured successful accomplishment of the tasks assigned them by the Supreme High Command.

The Volga Naval Flotilla, established in the difficult conditions of the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, consisting for the most part of re-fitted and modified river fleet vessels, gave substantial and timely assistance to the ground forces in accomplishing the main task of destroying the German-fascist forces at Stalingrad.

Gunboats, floating batteries, railway batteries and armored launches efficiently performed missions of artillery support of ground troops in the Battle of Stalingrad. Establishment of artillery observer posts, reliable communications, and correct disposition of brigade command posts ensured prompt and timely delivery of fire on the enemy, which frequently thwarted enemy attempts to break through our forces' defense.

The Volga Flotilla played an important role in ensuring transport across the Volga, providing replacements to the ranks of the city's defenders and providing them with all needed supplies. In a situation where German-fascist command authorities were employing massive planting of influence mines for the purpose of preventing the hauling of supplies along the strategic Volga water route, flotilla authorities swiftly deployed minesweeping forces, organized an extensive network of observation posts to spot the dropping of mines, enlisted the civilian population to this task, and worked out together with river fleet authorities the requisite system of river traffic escort and en route mooring. All these measures were carried out in a combined manner. They ensured thwarting of the enemy's attempts to disrupt shipping on the Volga.

Thanks to purposeful indoctrination work conducted by commanders, political agencies, party and Komsomol organizations, the men of the Volga Naval Flotilla successfully accomplished their assigned tasks of ensuring uninterrupted operation of the Volga shipping artery, which was supplying the battle front and the nation's home front with various goods. The crews of the gunboats "Usyskin" and "Chapayev" were awarded the Order of the Red Banner for their heroic combat exploits, and the honorary guards appellation was awarded to the 1st and 2nd Armored Launch divisions.

The combat experience of the Volga Naval Flotilla in the Battle of Stalingrad was widely utilized by all other river flotillas in the subsequent years of the Great Patriotic War.

FOOTNOTES

1. At the end of July 1942 the flotilla contained the following: 7 gunboats, 15 armored launches, 33 minesweepers, 2 floating batteries, 2 railway batteries, 2 auxiliary vessels. In the course of combat operations refitted and modified mobilized vessels were added to the forces afloat. Specifications and performance figures for the principal ships were as follows: gunboats of the "Usyskin" class displaced 400 tons, had a speed of 9 knots (16.5 km/h), had a draft of 1.25 m, and carried the following armament: 2 100 mm guns, 2 45 mm guns, 2 antiaircraft machineguns. S-40 class armored launches carried a 76.2 mm gun and 4 machineguns. Ya-5 class launches were armed with an M-8 gun and 2 DShK machineguns. River bus type minesweepers had a top speed of 8.1 knots (15 km/h) and could carry up to 100 men with their weapons (TsVMA [Central Naval Archives], Fund 93, File 7590, sheets 33-35).
2. TsVMA, Fund 93, File 7557, Sheet 6.
3. "Bolevoy put' Sovetskogo Voyenno-Morskogo Flota" [Fighting Journey of the Soviet Navy], third, enlarged edition, Voyenizdat, 1974, page 406.
4. N. P. V'yunenko and R. N. Mordvinov, "Voyennyye flotilii v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе. Kratkiy voyenno-istoricheskiy ocherk" [Naval Flotillas in the Great Patriotic War. A Concise Military-Historical Sketch], Voyenizdat, 1957, page 20.

5. Ibid., page 24.
6. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 11, 1972, page 58.
7. "Boyevoy...," op. cit., pp 411-412.
8. "Morskoy Atlas" [Naval Atlas], Vol 3, Part II, sheets 28, 32.
9. V. I. Chuykov, "Nachalo puti" [The Journey Begins], second, revised and expanded edition, Voenizdat, 1962, page 182.
10. "Boyevoy...," op. cit., page 403.
11. TsVMA, Fund 93, File 7590, sheets 78, 79.

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LOGISTICAL SERVICES AND SPECIAL TROOPS

COMBAT ENGINEERS IN THE BATTLE FOR STALINGRAD

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 82 (signed to press 25 Oct 82) pp 49-54

[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Docent and Candidate of Military Sciences Mar Engr Trps S. Aganov, chief of engineer troops, Ministry of Defense: "Engineer Troops"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] Military engineer activities in support of combat operations were extensively employed at all stages of the Battle of Stalingrad. IN THE COURSE OF THE DEFENSE the main efforts of engineer troops were directed toward creating conditions for increasing the stability and aggressiveness of the defense. This was achieved by constructing defensive zones, lines, positions, obstacles, and organizing uninterrupted ferrying of troops, ammunition and equipment across the Don and Volga.

The system of defensive lines at Stalingrad contained the following: 4 semi-circular perimeters between the Volga and the Don, separate strongpoints and tank-killing areas, and fortifications within the city proper. The total extent of defensive lines amounted to 1200 km.¹ The nucleus of each consisted of battalion defense areas protected by antitank ditches, sidehill cuts, and counter-scarps. Tank hulls and turrets, as well as reinforced concrete components were frequently used in building weapon emplacements.

Prior to commencement of the defensive battle, a total of 225,000 local citizens took part in construction of these defensive lines, responding to an appeal by local party and soviet organizations,² working under the supervision of the 24th and 26th defensive construction directorates as well as the command authorities of units of the 7th Reserve Army. As the threat of an enemy breakthrough to the Volga grew, the troops of the 5th Reserve Army and a number of engineer units of the 6th, 7th, and 8th Combat Engineer armies were enlisted in defensive fortification work. And although a shortage of time prevented full completion of defensive fortifications, nevertheless they helped repulse enemy attacks and slow the enemy's rate of advance.

Front-line and army engineer units took part in building fortifications and obstacles as deployment of the forces of the Stalingrad Front (Maj Gen Engr Trps A. V. Il'in-Mitkevich served as chief of engineer troops up to 12 August 1942; he was succeeded by Col A. I. Proshlyakov) proceeded on the great bend of

the Don. One defensive area would be set up in the tactical zone of each army, and army rear area sectors at a depth of up to 30 km. As of the end of July 1942, directly subordinate to the front were the 16th Special Engineer Brigade (Col M. F. Ioffe, commanding) and 28 different independent engineer battalions, including 13 float bridge battalions. Each army had from 1 to 4 engineer (combat engineer) battalions. The front also had 38 divisional combat engineer battalions.

Construction of minefields was the most important task of the engineer troops. As the combined units of the 62nd and 64th armies (engineer troops chiefs Cols G. I. Tupichev and B. F. Budilov) reached their defense areas, from 2 to 3 obstacle construction detachments from division³ would mine the forward defense area to a depth of 15-30 km and a strip forward of the main line of resistance. The armies were not yet in close contact with the enemy.

Buildup of obstacles at operational depth, as well as laying of minefields in the system of defensive perimeters were being conducted while the defensive battle was in progress. The 62nd and 64th armies, for example, extensively employed engineer reserves (1 or 2 battalions), which laid minefields and blew up bridges on the axes of advance of enemy panzer forces.

Two engineer operations obstacle construction groups (from 2 to 4 battalions in each) were formed as elements of the front by orders of Headquarters, Supreme High Command [Hq SHC] to construct obstacle zones within the system of Stalingrad defensive perimeters. At the same time an SHC Reserve operational obstacle construction group, consisting of four combat engineer battalions under the command of Col Ya. M. Rabinovich, transferred from the Rostov area, was attached to the front. In August 1942 alone the combat engineers of this group laid approximately 140,000 mines, planted 80 demolition charges, and blew up 19 bridges, which greatly restricted the actions of the enemy's 4th Panzer Army. The enemy lost 53 tanks and a good deal of other combat equipment in the minefields they had laid.⁴ The need for extensive employment of obstacles demanded the forming of new specialized engineer combined units. In November 1942 the decision was made to re-form 14 combat engineer brigades into SHC Reserve engineer-mine brigades.⁵

In the course of the fierce defensive fighting at Stalingrad, the engineer troops of the 62nd Army were assigned important tasks of constructing obstacles, defensive works, adapting the city's buildings for defense, and helping move troops and supplies across the Volga. The army was substantially engineer-reinforced in order to accomplish these tasks. In addition to regular line battalions, it had 3 army engineer battalions, 2 engineer obstacle construction battalions, a motorized engineer battalion, a combat engineer battalion, and an independent special minelaying company. These units played an exceptionally important role. They laid on the outskirts of Stalingrad and within the city proper a total of 36,000 antitank and up to 20,000 antipersonnel mines.⁶ Mine densities ran approximately 800 antitank mines and 560 antipersonnel mines per km of frontage, which presented a formidable obstacle to the enemy.

Combat engineers were part of assault detachments and teams, demolished buildings adapted by the enemy for defense, and conducted underground mining. With the aid of an underground mining tunnel they blew up a powerful strongpoint near the Railroader's Club. Here is another example. Forward of the defense area of the 95th Rifle Division, the enemy was occupying a tactically important area south of the Barrikady Plant, from which he was delivering withering fire. The division commander ordered an assault team to capture it. At first, however, it was unsuccessful. Then, at the initiative of division engineer D. A. Zabolotskiy, combat engineers dug a 28-meter underground mining tunnel, running it up under a gasoline tank. This job was performed by the men of the divisional 48th Combat Engineer Battalion (Capt A. A. Arbuzov, commanding). They performed the job under extraordinarily difficult conditions, digging through heavy, oil-impregnated soil, but nevertheless completed the task on schedule. The gasoline tank explosion threw the Hitlerites into confusion and served as a signal for the Soviet troops to commence the assault. The enemy fled in panic, abandoning the occupied position, and our assault team captured it.⁷

The stability of the defense of the 62nd Army, which was fighting in the city, depended to a considerable degree on the river-crossing activities. Engineer units made a large contribution toward ensuring that the troops received all needed supplies. When the enemy reached the Volga, the frontage of the crossing area steadily narrowed. The 62nd Army had a single ferry crossing from the end of September up to the time the river froze over. Crossing equipment used at various times at this ferry crossing included 12 steamboats, 6 long boats, 13 barges, 2 heavy self-propelled assault ferries, 7 armored launches, 3 N2P ferries, and 6 BMK-70 launches. The 44th Float Bridge Battalion (Captain Gonchar, commanding) did a good job of maintaining the crossing operation. Approximately 200,000 men, 87 tanks, 350 guns with tractors, and 2300 tons of ammunition crossed just up to 20 October.⁸

Boat crossings, with the operating teams working day and night, played an important role in maintaining communication with small bridgeheads during the fall ice-forming period prior to freezeover. Performance of this important task was assigned to the 326th and 327th Army and 119th Engineer battalions (Capt F. A. Kozlov, Sr Lt G. I. Kachalinskiy, and Maj A. M. Trakhtenberg, commanding).

DURING THE PERIOD OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE AT STALINGRAD, the Soviet Supreme High Command carried out important and diversified measures, including in the area of improving the organizational structure of the engineer troops. The combat engineer armies were disbanded by November 1942. Engineer-combat engineer, engineer-mine, and float bridge brigades were formed in the Hq SHC Reserve, based on these armies, as well as special-purpose engineer brigades at a somewhat earlier date.

With a qualitative change in the strategic engineer reserve, new possibilities opened up for reinforcing with SHC Reserve engineer combined units front large strategic formations operating on the Stalingrad axis. Fairly large engineer forces were concentrated and assigned to the fronts by the beginning of the counteroffensive. The engineer troops of the Southwestern Front (Maj Gen Engr Trps L. Z. Kotlyar, commanding), for example, included 3 engineer-combat

engineer brigades, 1 engineer-mine brigade, 2 special-purpose engineer brigades, 1 heavy float bridge regiment, 2 independent engineer and 11 float bridge battalions, as well as a number of special subunits. The engineer troops of the Don Front (Maj Gen Engr Trps A. I. Proshlyakov, commanding) included 2 engineer-mine brigades, 1 engineer-combat engineer brigade, 1 special-purpose engineer-combat engineer brigade, 2 float bridge and 7 engineer (combat engineer) battalions. In addition they included several other special subunits. The armies of these fronts contained from 1 to 3 independent engineer battalions. The engineer troops of the Stalingrad Front (Maj Gen Engr Trps I. A. Petrov, commanding) consisted of approximately 30 combat engineer and engineer battalions, including elements of 2 engineer-combat engineer brigades and 1 special-purpose brigade, as well as 8 float bridge battalions and several special subunits.⁹ In addition, 71 divisional combat engineer battalions were operating in the combined units of the three fronts.

The principal forces of engineer troops during preparations for the counteroffensive were attached to the forward-echelon armies, with the exception of a small front reserve (up to 3 battalions). They were used en masse to support the main battle groups. This made it possible to increase fivefold the operational density of engineer troops in comparison with the Battle of Moscow. In the 5th Tank Army of the Southwestern Front, for example, it ran 5.5 combat engineer companies per km of breakthrough sector. But in connection with the fact that the overwhelming bulk of engineer manpower was left for performing army tasks, tactical density did not exceed 1 combat engineer company per km of frontage.

The element of surprise in launching the Soviet counteroffensive was achieved by means of well-conceived tactical and operational camouflage, concealment and deception, including the undetected concentration of the fronts' battle groups. This was not easy to accomplish, since assembly areas were located on bridge-heads (Southwestern and Don fronts), and it was necessary to ferry large quantities of troops and supplies across a major river (Stalingrad Front). In these conditions engineer units and subunits would have to set up a large number of crossing sites and expand the road network. And they succeeded in accomplishing the assigned tasks. For example, by the beginning of November 1942 there were already 15 bridges and 18 ferries across the Don, ranging from 3 to 60 tons in load capacity, in the zone of the Southwestern Front, while there were 5 bridges and 3 ferries in the zone of the Don Front.¹⁰ At the same time 8 float bridge battalions and 1 motorized engineer battalion were assigned to maintain Volga crossings on the Stalingrad Front, and 3 engineer battalions were assigned to set up ice crossings. Engineer units set up nine new crossing points in the zone of this front. A total of 50 ferry crossings were set up on the Volga from Saratov to Astrakhan. In addition, engineer units were maintaining 2 floating bridges and built a 1700 meter long composite bridge (scaffold bridge and floating bridge sections). All this made it possible in the period from 1 through 19 November 1942 to carry across the Volga 160,000 men, 430 tanks, 600 guns, 14,000 trucks, and approximately 7000 tons of ammunition.¹¹

More than 800 kilometers of tracks were built to aid troop redeployments just on the Southwestern Front. At the same time engineer troops of combined units and large strategic formations were conducting engineer reconnaissance of the

enemy's defense, were building command and control facilities, were clearing mines from friendly minefields, and conducting other engineer activities.

IN THE COURSE OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE the engineer troops of the fronts had to perform new tasks dictated by the more complex situation and changes in the modes of conduct of the engagement and operation. In connection with the fact that the enemy had proceeded to build a continuous defense which was heavily saturated with minefields forward of the main line of resistance, it was necessary to form a great many mine clearing teams (up to a squad of combat engineers each) to clear one or two lanes per attack-echelon rifle (tank) company. Teams were also formed to accompany close-support tanks (up to a combat engineer company per tank brigade). The engineer subunits in the combined units of the Stalingrad Front alone cleared 64 lanes across enemy minefields, clearing approximately 5000 mines.¹² Escort (movement support) detachments were essentially organized for the first time in supporting the operations of tank and mechanized corps. For example, an engineer battalion was attached to each tank corps of the 5th Tank Army for this purpose. Subsequently the assignment of such detachments became standard practice.

In the counteroffensive at Stalingrad engineer troops took active part in repelling fascist counterattacks and counterthrusts and in combat with the enemy's relieving and encircled forces. Mobile engineer reserves, consisting of 1 or 2 combat engineer platoons, formed in the divisions, were employed during penetration of the enemy's tactical zone of defense; these platoons laid mines on avenues of advance by counterattacking enemy forces.

Engineer units were widely employed to cover the flanks of the battle groups of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts. During commitment of a mobile task force of the Southwestern Front into the breach in the zone of the 47th Guards Rifle Division, for example, 2 engineer battalions were operating as mobile obstacle construction detachments, which laid 2340 antitank mines. When an outer perimeter of encirclement was formed, the 44th Special-Purpose Brigade (Col M. M. Cheskis, commanding) was moved into this sector. Between 24 and 30 November 1942 alone its battalions set up an obstacle belt along the Chir River on a frontage of 30 km, laying more than 20,000 antitank mines and several kilometers of electrified obstacles.¹³ Gaps between the rifle divisions and armies were protected by minefields on the inner perimeter of encirclement. Approximately 85,000 antitank mines and more than 30,000 antipersonnel mines were laid here.

During the period of combat against the relieving enemy force, the main efforts of the engineer troops of the Stalingrad Front were directed toward establishing a reliable obstacle system. In particular, engineer units laid 13,800 antitank mines, more than 2000 antipersonnel mines, and placed a great many demolition charges in the zone of the 51st Army on the Kotelnikovskiy axis during repelling of enemy attacks.¹⁴ The enemy sustained considerable losses in the minefields. His rate of advance dropped off sharply. All this helped us gain time for concentrating operational reserves (2nd Guards Army) and in the final analysis to defeat in detail the penetrating fascist force.

The following figures attest to the scale of engineer tasks accomplished in the course of annihilating the encircled force. Between 10 and 31 January 1943 the engineer troops of the Don Front constructed 1004 km and repaired 334 km of roads, built 39 and restored 27 bridges, performed an enormous volume of work clearing roads of drifted snow, cleared approximately 32,000 mines and demolition charges, and blew up 108 enemy earth-and-timber emplacements and bunkers.¹⁵ Similar tasks were performed by the engineer troops of the other fronts, thus ensuring successful completion of the offensive operations by the Soviet forces.

Those engineer units and combined units which had most distinguished themselves were awarded decorations for their excellent service in combat, and some were awarded the guards designation. Thousands of combat engineers and float bridge personnel received government decorations.

At all stages of the Battle of Stalingrad engineer troops played an important role in gaining victory over the adversary. Decisive massing of men and equipment on the main axes of advance, with the objective of performing the most important tasks, was the main principle of their combat utilization.

Organizational improvement of engineer troops continued as the battle progressed, resulting in determination of a structure which was maximally in conformity with the new conditions of warfare. The brigade form of organization of engineer troops was adopted as a basic principle at that time, and units and combined units of various specialization came into widespread use. Experience in employing mobile obstacle construction detachments was extensively utilized in subsequent Soviet military operations.

During the period of the counteroffensive engineer subunits were operating virtually for the first time as mine-clearing teams for establishing a system of lanes throughout the entire breakthrough sector, as well as close-support tank escort teams and army mobile task force movement support detachments. Employment of engineer troops in repelling enemy counterthrusts and in consolidating positions in the concluding stage of offensive operations was becoming mandatory in combat operations. On the basis of the experience of the Battle of Stalingrad, a conclusion was reached that it was essential to have a mobile engineer reserve in the offense as well, a reserve capable of aggressive maneuver of obstacles.

The experience obtained in engineer support of combat operations in the Battle of Stalingrad is still considered today in combat and operational training of engineer troops.

FOOTNOTES

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Fund 69, List 14069, File 175, Sheet 1.

2. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945 gg. Kratkaya istoriya" [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945. A Concise History], Second, Revised and Enlarged Edition, Voyenizdat, 1970, page 169.
3. A detachment included one or two combat engineer platoons with a supply of mines and escort subunits.
4. A. D. Tsirlin et al, "Inzhenernyye voyska v boyakh za Sovetskuyu Rodinu" [Engineer Troops in Combat for the Soviet Homeland], Voyenizdat, 1970, page 130.
5. TsAMO, Fund 69, List 12112, File 78, Sheet 243.
6. "Inzhenernyye voyska Sovetskoy Armii v vazhneyshikh operatsiyakh Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny. Sbornik statey" [Soviet Army Engineer Troops in the Major Operations of the Great Patriotic War. Collected Articles], Voyenizdat, 1958, page 102.
7. TsAMO, Fund 69, List 272733, File Otchet 62-y armii, Sheet 63.
8. Tsirlin, op. cit., page 133.
9. For more detail see Ibid., pp 138-139.
10. "Inzhenernyye voyska Sovetskoy..." op. cit., page 116.
11. TsAMO, Fund 220, List 496, File 16, Sheet 9.
12. TsAMO, Fund Stalingradskogo fronta, List 34981, File 1, Sheet 15.
13. TsAMO, Fund 69, List 14069, File 155, Sheet 5.
14. Tsirlin, op. cit., pp 143-144.
15. TsAMO, Fund 69, List 34677, File 1, Sheet 9.

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LOGISTICAL SERVICES AND SPECIAL TROOPS

COMMUNICATIONS TROOPS AT STALINGRAD

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[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Col Gen Sig Trps N. Popov, commanding officer, Military Signal Academy: "Signal Troops"]

[Text] Signal troops also made a significant contribution to the historic victory by the Soviet forces at Stalingrad: switchboard operators and linemen, radio operators and telegraph operators, military field post office personnel and other specialists, who displayed examples of courage and heroism. They were compelled to perform their missions on open ground, subjected to hostile airstrikes and artillery fire, and they had to run wire communication lines across major rivers -- the Volga and the Don.

At the beginning of the Battle of Stalingrad there were 2 independent signal regiments, 3 line signal battalions, 7 pole-and-cable, 5 telegraph-construction, 5 telegraph line-laying, 5 telegraph-line maintenance companies, and an air liaison squadron under the chief signals officer of the Stalingrad Front, Maj Gen N. A. Borzov (he was replaced by Col S. N. Kokorin in October 1942). Each army in turn had an independent signal regiment, a line communications battalion, 3 or 4 pole-and-cable companies, 1 or 2 telegraph line-laying companies, and 2 telegraph line-maintenance companies.¹

Signal units received replacements who had only gone through an accelerated training course and who lacked combat experience. Additional training was provided in the course of combat.

The wire communications of the Stalingrad Front, during combat on the approaches to the city, were by artery and link. A communications artery was established from the second echelon of the front's field headquarters in Krasnaya Sloboda, through the front's command center in Stalingrad, and on to the auxiliary control facility (VPU) in Kamyshi. This artery provided communications between the command center and the VPU, and through it to the 1st and 4th Tank armies, the 62nd and 64th Combined-Arms armies. Wire communications were provided by links to the 63rd, 21st, and 51st armies. Baudot and ST-35 telegraph equipment was used for communications with all large strategic formations. A shortcoming in organization of wire communications during that period was a lack of

communications between front headquarters, adjacent fronts and rear areas, plus utilization of single-wire lines for communications with the armies.

In the period from July through December 1942 approximately 400 kilometers of new communication lines were built, with 2000 kilometers of wire strung, in order to expand the network of permanent lines, and particularly for communications between the front, Hq SHC, and the armies.² In order to increase stability of wire communications with the large strategic formations, the communications centers of the People's Commissariat of Communications were removed from built-up areas, and bypass cable-and-pole and permanent overhead communications lines were built. Ringing of communications centers and the most important monitoring and testing stations was performed in order to ensure wire communications survivability. Each ring line consisted of 4 or 5 wires and would be placed at a distance of 4-5 km from populated localities. This made it possible to maneuver wires and to set up deep bypass communications when lines on principal links were damaged. In areas subjected to hostile artillery fire and bombing strikes, emergency repair teams provided with vehicles and line equipment were set up for each line-maintenance company. They repaired wire damage.³

Combat-zone signal units ran underwater cable across the Volga at Stalingrad and in the Dubovka area. This made it possible to switch telephone and telegraph trunk lines on the right and left banks and to obtain requisite communications with all army headquarters deployed south of Stalingrad, as well as an additional link for communications with the General Staff. We should note that initially eight field cable telephone lines were laid across the Volga. But operating experience indicated that in order to ensure uninterrupted communications, cables had to be replaced every 2-5 days. Therefore subsequently special cable delivered by air from Moscow was laid on the riverbed.

Laying of wire communications was made more difficult due to a lack of building materials in the combat zone. In response to a report from the chief signals officer of the front, the military council issued a special order, authorizing signal troops to utilize for building lines and communications centers all suitable materials within the combat zone, regardless of ownership.⁴

Radio was also widely employed in the defense. Stalingrad Front radio communications were set up from the command center and auxiliary control facility. Radio communications with the General Staff included two auditory radio nets and one printer radio link with an RAT radio set with an Almaz attachment. One of the auditory radio nets was used by the General Staff to communicate with the headquarters of the the Stalingrad Front and its armies, while the other was used for auditory radio communications between the Voronezh, Stalingrad, and Northern Caucasus fronts. Front headquarters maintained communications with the armies by two medium-power radio nets and one backup net with Sever radio sets.

Radio communications between armies were maintained with three radio nets. Two were designated for handling coordination between combined-arms and tank formations, and one -- between the 8th Air Army, the 64th and 51st armies. Radio

communications were established with the 1st and 4th Tank armies from the front's auxiliary control facility by the radio net of the commander of armored and mechanized troops.⁵

The radio communications of the Stalingrad Front subsequently were continuously being improved, which promoted more stable troop control. In August-September 1942 a special net was established for communications with fortified areas, and a backup network for communications with combined units (units) withdrawn into the front's reserve. Radio communications with the Volga Naval Flotilla used a special link. On 6 September 1942, by an order issued by front headquarters, a mobile team was formed, consisting of six RSB radio sets mounted on vehicles with cross-country capability. This made it possible to send out to the armies headquarters operations directorate officers with radio sets and to obtain situation reports from them much faster.

A special radio link was established to improve coordination between the artillery of the Stalingrad and Southeastern fronts (Maj Gen Sig Trps A. S. Yakovlev, chief signals officer).

The commanding general of the 8th Air Army designated a permanent representative with a radio set to provide coordination with ground troops; this representative was stationed with the deputy commander of the front. The aviation representative, maintaining communications with his headquarters, could at the same time communicate with any air division and refine or detail its mission.⁶

Control of artillery was handled with special radio nets of the Stalingrad Front's commander of artillery. These nets included the radio sets of the artillery commanders of the armies and the commanders of front artillery and antiaircraft artillery groups.

A 160-man cavalry squadron was attached to the front's chief signals officer during the period of muddy roads in the fall, to beef up communications with mobile means.

Of considerable interest is organization of communications in the armies which bore the brunt of the fighting in the city.

In the 64th Army (Lt Col I. T. Borisenko, chief signals officer) wire communications between army command and control facilities during the fighting on the near approaches to Stalingrad were organized by artery, using permanent overhead open-wire lines, while communications with combined units were by links. In the army communications system, sometimes one or two auxiliary communications centers would be set up, as well as one or two alternate command post communications centers. Communications with the General Staff were maintained by radio link with RAT radio sets, and with front headquarters by two radio nets with RAF (RSB) radio sets and by radio link with Sever radio sets.

In the 62nd Army (Col I. A. Yurin, chief signals officer) wire communications were set up by a link from the command post and auxiliary command facility, which were joined by several lines with an alternate command post (ZKP). In the army and its combined units wire communications were conducted by field cable lines. In the units and subunits defending in the city, communications

extended down to the platoon, and sometimes even to the squad if it was defending an important installation.

When the enemy reached the Volga by the Tractor Plant, the situation in the army's defensive zone became even more complicated. It was necessary to maintain continuous stable communications with all its combined units, including the forces under the command of Col S. F. Gorokhov (124th and 149th Rifle brigades) and Col I. I. Lyudnikov's 138th Rifle Division, which were cut off from the main forces. Auxiliary communications centers and check and test points were quickly set up on both banks of the Volga for this purpose; two small cable-and-pole and three permanent open-wire lines were constructed, joining the army command post and alternate command post. Stable communications with S. F. Gorokhov's group and the 138th Division were also maintained with the alternate command post via auxiliary communications centers and check and test points.

It is important to note that in order to protect field cable lines, efforts were made to run them through basements and sewer pipes, while well-insulated cables were buried. They were able to improve stability of wire communications by quickly repairing damage on the lines with the aid of telephone check points placed every 200-400 meters.

Radio communications with the 62nd Army were organized for the most part by radio nets (RSB). Radio link communications were established only with the General Staff, the auxiliary control facility, and the 115th fortified area. During fighting in the city, in order to protect medium-power radios from artillery and mortar fire and to eliminate interference, they were sited at an alternate radio communications center on the left bank of the Volga. Only RB radio sets remained at the command post of the large strategic formation, with which communications were maintained with the divisions, artillery, and river vessels. To control the army's artillery, initially two radio nets were established to provide radio communications with the divisional artillery commanders and one net for communications with their headquarters.

A special river vessels radio net was established to maintain communications with the Volga crossings. These included radio sets at army headquarters and the crossings (river vessels).

During the period of the defensive fighting at Stalingrad, signal troops not only laid communications lines under enemy fire but also courageously engaged the enemy. On 24 August 1942, for example, 33 men led by junior political officer A. G. Yevtifyev, political officer of a signal company of the 1379th Rifle Regiment of the 87th Rifle Division, and Jr Lt A. A. Strelkov, commander of this company's radio platoon, joined in unequal combat with 70 enemy tanks. For two days these intrepid soldiers held out in the vicinity of Malaya Rossoshka. In spite of the fact that they were armed only with rifles, grenades, Molotov cocktails and antitank rifles, they destroyed 27 enemy tanks and killed a great many officers and enlisted men, forcing the fascists to halt their attacks.

A heroic deed in the heat of the fighting around the Barrikady Plant was performed by signalmen M. M. Putilov from the signal battalion of the 308th Rifle Division of the 62nd Army. Instructed to repair a damaged line, Putilov, in spite of serious injuries in his arms and legs, succeeded in crawling to the point of break and joining the severed ends of the telephone wire with his teeth. This valiant soldier died, but he carried out his duty to the very end.

The signal troops of the fronts gained considerable experience in organizing and providing communications in the defense. They employed radio printing telegraphy at the General Staff-front echelon, and they also verified the reliability of organizing radio communications with supporting aviation.

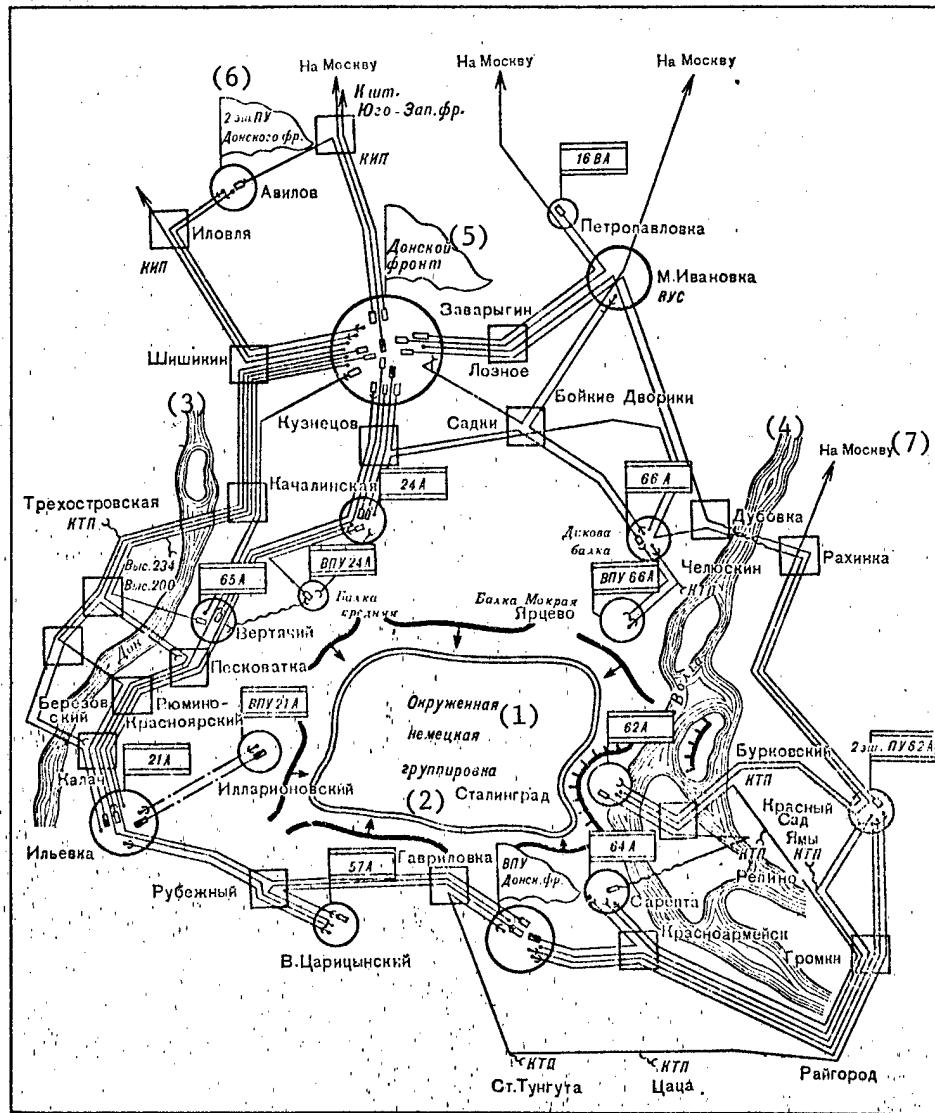
By the beginning of the counteroffensive, the Red Army Main Signal Directorate had taken a number of measures to bring up to strength the signal troops of the Southwestern, Don, and Stalingrad fronts, providing them with communications equipment, officers and specialists, and adding signal units. In addition, the People's Commissariat of Communications placed additional wire communications equipment at the disposal of the fronts and took measures to increase stability of communications on the links to these fronts.⁸ At the beginning of November 1942 Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Gen I. T. Peresypkin was sent to Stalingrad to assist the fronts in organizing and maintaining communications. He brought with him experienced military communications specialists Gen N. P. Yershov and Cols V. G. Kozhetev and N. I. D'yachkov.⁹

In preparing for the operation, considerable importance was attached to setting up coordination communications between fronts and armies, as well as between rifle, armored and mechanized troops and aviation. Particular difficulties were presented by organization of communications between forces advancing toward one another at operational depth in the enemy's defenses. For the first time in the Great Patriotic War it became necessary to provide for teamwork and cooperation between troops operating on an inner and outer perimeter of encirclement.

On the whole the signal troops had to perform very difficult and important missions. Therefore special conferences of signal officers of all echelons were held in all fronts during the preparation period, at which they used the experience gained in the Battle of Moscow to study the specific features of organization of communications and signal troops activities during an offensive, while training conferences for communications specialists were held in the armies and divisions.

Wire communications in the fronts were planned to the entire depth of the operation. Plans call for setting up (restoring) in each front at least one main and one auxiliary communications artery, and communications links with armies attacking on the main axis of advance. Lateral lines of communication were set up for executing maneuver.

In view of the fact that the network of permanent communications lines in the tactical zone of operations of the fronts was insufficiently developed and could not provide all troop control requirements, new lines were to be constructed, with additional stringing of wires on existing lines, both in the attack position and in the operation. The signal troops of the Southwestern



Organization of Wire Communications of the Don Front During Annihilation of the Encircled Enemy Force (January 1943)

Key:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Encircled German force | A. Army |
| 2. Stalingrad | BA. Air army |
| 3. Don River | БПУ. Auxiliary control facility |
| 4. Volga River | |
| 5. Don Front | |
| 6. Second-echelon control facility of the Don Front | |
| 7. To Moscow | |

Front, for example, constructed 168 km and restored 629 km of communications lines, and strung 1175 km of wires on existing lines.¹¹

During the counteroffensive radio communications between the 5th Tank Army of the Southwestern Front (Col B. P. Borisov, chief signals officer), and the 51st Army of the Stalingrad Front (Col V. A. Khorev, chief signals officer), which were driving toward one another, used the coordination radio nets of these fronts, by hooking into them the radio sets of the army headquarters and the 1st, 26th Tank, and 4th Mechanized Corps. Communications were established between the tank corps and brigades of the 5th Tank Army on the one hand and the combined units of the 51st Army on the other by connecting their headquarters radio sets into the linkup coordination radio nets.¹²

In organizing coordination, the Red Army Main Signal Directorate formulated principles of "linkup frequency" radio communications. The new method consisted essentially in the following: combined units and units advancing toward one another were to tune their radios to a prior specified frequency. Each army would be assigned one call sign, while its combined units and units would be assigned the same call sign, plus the addition of an identifying number designation. This made it possible quickly to determine the identification of a transmitter and to establish communications between combined units and units moving toward one another.¹³

Meriting attention is the skillful organization of communications in the Don Front (Col P. Ya. Maksimenko, chief signals officer), which was conducting the operation to destroy the encircled enemy force.

For the first time in the war the wire communications of a front headquarters were organized in a closed ring (see diagram) by a single permanent open-wire line from command post and auxiliary control facilities. Subsequently, as the perimeter of encirclement narrowed, its lines gradually were built up. By the end of the operation, for example, there were several lines in the western part of the perimeter with a well-developed system of auxiliary communications centers, check and test points. This made it possible to maintain stable wire communications between front headquarters and army headquarters and coordination communications between large strategic formations. In addition, organized in this manner, in certain instances it provided (via army communications centers) coordination communications between the combined units which were splitting up the enemy force and advancing toward one another. Wire liaison communications between the Don Front and supporting aviation were organized through a system of front and army communications centers, check and test points, to which air combined unit headquarters were connected. Radio communications between the front command center and auxiliary control facilities on the one hand and the General Staff on the others were handled through the radio nets of the latter with conversion to radio link by printing telegraphy, with combined-arms armies by radio nets and the front's radio links, and with tank formations by the radio net of the commander of front armored and mechanized forces. Liaison radio communications were organized through the General Staff radio net and three front radio nets.

Mobile means of communication were extensively utilized both in the defense and during the Soviet counteroffensive.

In the course of the Battle of Stalingrad signal troops received their first experience in organizing communications for Gen A. M. Vasilevskiy representative of Headquarters, Supreme High Command. These communications were handled by a mobile communications center specially formed in Moscow. It provided exchange of information with Headquarters and the General Staff, adjacent fronts, and frequently with armies as well. In addition to radio and wire communications, Gen A. M. Vasilevskiy's group frequently employed liaison aircraft.¹⁴

In conclusion we should note that signal troops in the Battle of Stalingrad successfully performed the difficult and important missions assigned them pertaining to ensuring firm, flexible and continuous troop control. Much credit for this goes to front chief signals officers P. I. Belyavtsev, N. A. Borzov, A. I. Leonov, A. S. Yakovlev, S. N. Kokorin, and P. Ya. Maksimenko; army chief signals officers M. V. Belyanchik, A. I. Borisov, B. P. Borisov, I. T. Borisenko, N. Ye. Zaychik, N. B. Zakharov, S. V. Kolesov, V. A. Khorev, I. A. Yurin, and others. Much was accomplished toward ensuring reliable communications at the tactical control echelon by the senior signals officers of the corps and divisions, brigades and regiments, and the commanders of signal units and subunits.

A new element in organization of wire communications in an offensive was communications around a perimeter of encirclement, and in utilization of radio communications -- establishment of a mobile group consisting of radio sets mounted on motor vehicles, and special linkup coordination nets.

The experience gained by signal troops in the Battle of Stalingrad was successfully applied in the subsequent operations of the Great Patriotic War. It influenced organizational changes in these troops and the development of improved communications equipment, meeting the demands of reliable and uninterrupted Soviet Armed Forces troops control.

FOOTNOTES

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Fund 48, List 481, File 10, sheets 419-420.
2. "Voyennyye svyazisty v dni voyny i mira" [Signal Troops in War and Peace], Voenizdat, 1968, pp 166, 168.
3. TsAMO, Fund 48, List 481, File 10, Sheet 412.
4. TsAMO, Fund 71, List 12191, File 16, sheets 14, 17.
5. TsAMO, List 1481, File 10, sheets 410-412.
6. TsAMO, Fund 71, List 12191, File 16, Sheet 20.
7. Footnote omitted.

8. "Istoriya razvitiya voysk svyazi" [History of Development of the Signal Troops], Voyenizdat, 1980, page 167.
9. I. T. Peresypkin, "Svyaz' v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе" [Communications in the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Nauka, 1973, page 140.
10. Footnote omitted.
11. TsAMO, Fund 71, List 12191, File 70, sheets 182-186.
12. TsAMO, Fund 292, List 608, File 10, sheets 10-11.
13. TsAMO, Fund 71, List 12191, File 70, Sheet 184.
14. Peresypkin, op. cit., pp 146, 147.

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LOGISTICAL SERVICES AND SPECIAL TROOPS

REAR SERVICES SUPPORT AT STALINGRAD

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 82 (signed to press 25 Oct 82) pp 62-69

[Article, published under the heading "40th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad," by Hero of the Soviet Union Col Gen K. Abramov, commanding officer, Military Academy of Rear Services and Transportation: "Some Features of Logistic Support"; passages rendered in all capital letters printed in boldface in source]

[Text] Rear services support in the Battle of Stalingrad was provided in an extremely complex operational and rear services situation. THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF ORGANIZATION OF THE OPERATIONAL REAR SERVICES were determined by the nature and high degree of intensity of combat operations as well as the existence of large rivers flowing north to south in the zones of the fronts.

During the period of defensive operations, a portion of the front army supply depots (their departments), with supplies of ammunition and fuel on the troops' routes of withdrawal, were sited in advance at points on the far and near approaches to Stalingrad. In conditions of abrupt situation changes and massive hostile air activities directed against lines of communication, such a procedure of deployment of supply depots increased the stability of logistic support and promoted successful performance of combat missions by the troops.

The bulk of front and army supply depots, medical, maintenance and other rear services units and establishments were dispersed deep in the rear areas, sited at rail stations and as a rule disposed in two echelons in several areas along the Povorino-Stalingrad, Balashov-Kamyshin, Verkhnyaya Akhtuba-Verkhniy Baskunchak, and Urbakh-Astrakhan rail lines. Army field depots (PAB) containing the bulk of supplies and a large percentage of army hospital bases (GBA) were deployed in the area of 2-3 railheads at a distance of 150-200 km (Stalingrad Front) and 80-100 km (Southeastern Front) from the battle line. Closer to the fighting troops, at 60-80 km, armies were designated one railhead each, in the vicinity of which the lead sections of army field depots (GOPAB) were situated, consisting of ammunition, fuel, and food supply depot sections. In the 51st and 28th armies of the Southeastern Front, GOPAB were deployed on unprepared sites on the west bank of the Volga.

The forward echelon of front field depots, medical, maintenance, veterinary, motor transport and road units and establishments was positioned on the line of army field depots: in the Stalingrad Front -- on the Povorino-Rakovka, Petrov Val-Kamyshin rail lines; in the Southeastern Front -- on the Verkhniy Baskunchak-Leninsk line. The remainder of the front supply depots and other rear services units and establishments were situated in the vicinity of rail stations deep in the combat-zone rear areas.¹ In view of the high degree of hostile air activities, particular attention was devoted to dispersing, reliably sheltering and concealing supplies, and measures were taken to shorten the standing time of supply-carrying vehicles for loading and off-loading.

During preparations for the counteroffensive, the forward rear services echelons in all three fronts were substantially beefed up and brought closer to the line. The Southwestern Front (Maj Gen N. A. Kuznetsov, rear services chief), for example, deployed his forward rear services echelon on the Budarino-Mikhaylovka rail line section; the Don Front (Maj Gen I. G. Sovetnikov, rear services chief) -- in the Matyshevo-Kamyshin area; the Stalingrad Front (Maj Gen N. P. Anisimov, rear services chief) -- on the west and east banks of the Volga in the Krasnoarmeysk-Chernyy Yar and Vladimirovka-Leninsk areas.² The distance between the forward rear services echelon of the fronts and the forward defended localities in the attack position did not exceed 80-100 km.

In the course of the counteroffensive the fronts moved forward, behind the battle groups, the supply depot sections with supplies of ammunition, fuel, and provisions. The rear services chief of the Southwestern Front assigned to this task several motor transport battalions, which advanced behind the tank combined units, provided them with all necessary supplies, and essentially constituted mobile supply detachments. On their return run the empty trucks of the motor transport battalions evacuated sick and wounded.

On 27 November the Stalingrad Front began moving the front field supply depots closer to the fighting troops and deploying supply detachments on the west bank of the Volga around Krasnoarmeysk, Svetlyy Yar, and Solodniki.

Red Army logistical headquarters reacted swiftly to the change in the operational situation at Stalingrad. On its instructions, for example, supply to the troops of the 51st, 57th, and 64th armies of the Stalingrad Front, which had advanced to the vicinity of Kalach, Karpovka, and Krivomuzginskaya, beginning from the first days of December was provided from Don Front stores, from Kalachino station. A portion of the centrally-controlled rolling stock designated for the Stalingrad Front was redirected at this time to the Povorino-Stalingrad rail line, destination Kachalino railhead.

On 4 December the rear services chief of the Stalingrad Front moved up into the Kachalino area front ammunition, fuel and provisions-feed supply detachments. A command group headed by Maj Gen I. S. Savinov, the front's deputy chief of rear services, was formed to direct the activities of these detachments, which were deployed in the zone of another front.³ From the railhead the armies hauled supplies forward by their own means of transportation.

The army supply detachments also moved steadily closer to the troops on the line in the course of the offensive. GOPAB were set up at unprepared sites in all armies fighting as elements of front battle groups.

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT. The substantial duration of the Battle of Stalingrad, the existence of a large force grouping taking part in the fighting, the intensity and fierceness of combat actions dictated higher requirements by the units and combined units in ammunition, fuel, provisions, fodder, and other supplies. Just during the defensive fighting at Stalingrad, for example, the fronts expended more than 7 million artillery and mortar rounds, while during the counteroffensive (from November to 31 December 1942) they expended on the average up to 2000 tons of ammunition and approximately 1000 tons of fuel per day. Total consumption of materiel during the Battle of Stalingrad was greater than that during the Battle of Moscow by a factor of 1.7-2.4

Replenishment of such a large consumption and stockpiling of the requisite supplies in the line units were carried out under difficult conditions. Inadequate development of the network of roads and rail lines, a limited number of trucks in the fronts, and massive hostile air attacks on rail yards and rail centers, bridges and crossing sites on the Don and Volga greatly complicated the hauling of materiel both from the heartland areas and in the zones of operations of the fronts.

The State Defense Committee and Red Army Logistical Headquarters were taking vigorous measures to supply the fronts with all requisite materiel. Transport of fuel from Baku to Gurev by sea, for example, was organized in record time. In order to ease the load on the railroads and to shift part of the burden over to water transport, supply bases were established in Volsk, Saratov, Kamyshin, and Makhachkala.

Local material and manpower resources were important in ensuring uninterrupted supply to the fighting forces. The military councils, headquarters staffs and rear services agencies of the fronts and armies worked in close coordination with local party and soviet agencies. Kolkhozes and sovkhozes supplied the troops with large quantities of foodstuffs and fodder, repaired combat and special equipment, provided truck and animal-drawn transport, and repaired roads and rail lines. By the beginning of the counteroffensive the farmers of Stalingrad Oblast had supplied to the fronts 23.6 million poods of grain, 58,000 tons of meat, 60,000 tons of milk, more than 50,000 tons of potatoes and vegetables, and 30 million eggs. More than 600 tanks and armored cars, more than 1600 trucks, and a substantial quantity of other equipment and weapons were repaired just at the Red Army shipyard in Stalingrad and at five sovkhozes and machine-tractor stations in the oblast.⁵

The fronts and armies extensively maneuvered supply depots and detachments with stores of ammunition, fuel and provisions, constantly bringing them close to the combat troops. Such maneuvering improved the stability of logistic support and helped achieve faster replenishment of expended supplies. Positive results were obtained by redistribution of stores of supplies between front, army, and front-line supply terminals. As we know, due to transportation difficulties they were unable by the beginning of the offensive to establish the

designated supply stockpiles on the line for the battle groups of the South-western and Stalingrad fronts. The military councils of the fronts decided to reduce the standard levels of supply at front depots and to channel the bulk of ammunition and fuel to the armies and units on the line. In the course of the swift advance, ammunition and fuel were hauled by front transport capabilities directly to the tank combined units and to the artillery fire positions.

In the difficult specific conditions of the Battle of Stalingrad, organization of supply transport was characterized by a number of new and unique solutions. It was precisely in this battle that the actual foundations were laid down for combined utilization of rail, water, truck, animal-drawn and air transport; moving of supplies across a major water obstacle was skillfully accomplished for the first time, supplies for the forthcoming offensive were stockpiled in advance and undetected, and rigid quantity limits and daily monitoring of the expenditure of the principal types of ammunition and fuel were set up in the fronts and armies.

Rail transport performed the bulk of supply and other military hauling at the front echelon. In order to increase the traffic capacity of the rail lines, additional siding capabilities were constructed, "live block signaling and interlocking" was employed, the dispatch of trains in closely-spaced following sections ("caravans") and one-way traffic were extensively practiced. On the Urbakh-Astrakhan rail line, for example, trains carrying troops and supplies would proceed toward Stalingrad, and after off-loading, the empty trains would be returned to Astrakhan. This traffic procedure greatly sped up the concentration of troops and stockpiling of supplies. Empty railcars piling up at Astrakhan would be temporarily transferred to urban streetcar tracks and even parked off tracks on the ground. Trains carrying troops and supplies would move only at night, while off-loading would be accomplished at widely-spaced locations, and sometimes along stretches between stations.

Valuable experience in organizing hauling by rail was also obtained in the course of the offensive. On 23 November railway troops began repairing and restoring to service liberated sections of rail line. Within 12 days the very important stretch from Sarepta to Kotelnikovo (144 km), in the zone of the Stalingrad Front, was repaired and restored to service. Hauling of supplies involved transfer: supplies were brought as far as Leninsk by the operating rail line, from which they were transferred to trucks and delivered via the Volga crossings to Krasnoarmeysk, where they were once again loaded into rail shuttle consists and transported by restored rail line to the army and combined unit railheads. The front set up a transshipment base at Krasnoarmeysk for transferring supplies.

Hauling of supplies using isolated rail line sections was also conducted during subsequent development of the offensive. In connection with the slow pace of rebuilding of bridges, a number of disconnected rail line sections formed in the fronts' zones of advance (Chir-Morozovskaya-Belya Kalitva; Belya Kalitva-Likhaya; Likhaya-Kamenskaya; plus others). Along these stretches of line shuttle consists would be made up with captured rolling stock, which would run in shuttle fashion with ammunition and fuel from forward army supply depots to the railheads of the forward-echelon combined units.

Efficient utilization of the entire network of rail lines played a decisive role in uninterrupted logistic support of the fighting troops both in the defensive and offensive periods of the Battle of Stalingrad. More than 200,000 carloads of military supplies were delivered to the fronts from 12 July 1942 to 1 January 1943.⁶

Water transport was performing important, difficult tasks. A large percentage of the ammunition, fuel, foodstuffs and other supplies for the troops of the Stalingrad, Southeastern, and Don fronts was transported along the Volga and the Caspian Sea. Goods would proceed down the Volga from Saratov to Kamyshin in large transit vessels, after which they would be transferred to small vessels (launches) and delivered directly to the armies and combined units at offloading stages at Pichuga, Dubovka, Vodyanoye, Lugovaya, etc. Fuel from the Baku area was transported by sea to Astrakhan, transferred to small barges and hauled up the Volga to the Solodniki, Svetlyy Yar, and Tatyanka area. In this area several well-concealed and sheltered barges were used as mobile front reserve supply terminals. During the Battle of Stalingrad river vessels delivered to destination points approximately 3,800,000 tons of refined product.⁷

Water transport played an important role in ferrying materiel across the Volga. In the defensive period 50 crossing sites were operating along the river between Saratov and Astrakhan, at which 134 ferries were operating. They worked continuously, in spite of massive bombing attacks, channel mining, artillery and mortar bombardment, and the fall-winter passage of ice. The vessels of the Volga Naval Flotilla and the Lower Volga River Steamship Company hauled more than 250,000 tons of materiel just during the defensive period. This greatly helped ensure uninterrupted supply to the fighting forces and increased their combat capabilities and firmness.

Front and army motor transport hauled materiel to the combined units and units from river crossing sites, landing stages and railway stations. In connection with its limited capabilities to operate at the operational echelon, combat unit vehicles were also extensively employed. Approximately 27,000 trucks were used to haul troops and supplies during preparations for the counteroffensive. In October and the first 20 days of November trucks delivered to the combat troops more than 48,000 tons of ammunition, fuel, provisions, and other supplies.⁸

Operational support vehicles were frequently used for urgent hauling of ammunition and fuel, and local animal-drawn transport was extensively enlisted. For example, 1000 bullock-pair teams, each of which hauled up to a ton of ammunition or fuel, were working in the rear areas of the Southwestern Front during preparations for and in the course of the offensive.

In order better to utilize the various modes of transportation and to increase the responsibility of officials for hauling operations, on 6 September the chief of rear services of the Stalingrad Front issued a special order. It specified a new, more clearly defined supply transport procedure: from a front regulating-distribution point (FRS) and front supply depots to PAB (army regulating-distribution points and railheads) -- by front transport, and from that point on by army and division transport. Responsibility for supply

transport was placed as follows: from FRS to PAB -- on the front's chief of rear services; from PAB to GOPAB and divisional supply depots -- on army chiefs of rear services; from divisional supply depots to front-line units -- on combined unit deputy commanders for rear services and unit commanders.⁹

In order to ensure reliable supply of materiel to the combined units of the advancing main forces of the fronts, Headquarters, Supreme High Command [Hq SHC] additionally beefed up the Southwestern Front with two motor transport regiments, and the Stalingrad Front with two motor transport battalions. In addition, two air transport divisions of Li-2 aircraft were designated for supplying mobile task forces by air. At the end of December transport aviation was enlisted to fly ammunition and fuel to the 24th Tank Corps, which was encircled in the vicinity of Tatsinskaya Station, and was subsequently called upon for emergency delivery of supplies to the tank and mechanized combined units of the 2nd Guards Army, which was repelling attempts by Manstein's forces to relieve the troops which were encircled at Stalingrad. Earlier, during the defensive fighting, Po-2 aircraft were employed to supply the combined units and units of the 62nd Army. In particular, during freezing over of the Volga aircraft delivered ammunition and food to the combined units of Cols S. F. Gorokhov, I. I. Lyudnikov, and V. A. Gorishnyy, which were operating in isolated sectors. Every night 15-25 Po-2 aircraft would fly from 3 to 4 missions each, dropping from low heights (frequently 10-15 meters) ammunition and food, contained in special sacks -- supplies which the troops badly needed.

The advanced principle of centralized organization of supply employed at Stalingrad, with the combined utilization of various modes of transportation and full responsibility borne by senior-level officers for prompt delivery of supplies to subordinate troops, was improved and perfected in subsequent operations. On 24 May 1943 the State Defense Committee, taking into consideration the experience of logistic support of the forces at Stalingrad, made a decision according to which responsibility for delivery of all types of materiel to lower echelon rear services components was on senior-level officers.¹⁰

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF TRANSPORT SERVICES. In the Battle of Stalingrad troops received a wealth of experience in organizing transport services. Rear services agencies performed a great deal work to increase the traffic capacity of rail lines and to organize technical support in conditions of massive enemy air attacks.

As we know, the network of rail lines in the Stalingrad area was rather sparsely developed and was not prepared to handle large-scale military traffic. In order to increase the traffic capacity of the rail lines, the railway troops of the fronts and the transport agencies of the People's Commissariat of Railways had to construct in extremely short order a large number of additional sidings, bypass lines, connecting branches, off-loading platforms, ramps, and new rail lines. Local civilians were extensively recruited for this work. Twenty new sidings, lines bypassing large yards, and a connecting branch between the Akhtubinsk and Astrakhan lines were built, for example, on the Urbakh-Astrakhan line. Four additional sidings and a bypass at Talovaya Station, used for through traffic from Povorino to Kalach, were built on the Talovaya-Kalach rail line. Construction of new rail lines was proceeding at

a priority pace: Petrov Val-Ilovlya (136 km); Akhtuba-Paromnaya (138 km); and Gumrak-Prichalnaya (35 km). By decision of the State Defense Committee, construction began on Saratov-Stalingrad and Kizlyar-Astrakhan rail lines. Upon completion of construction, the new lines were immediately put to use for hauling military supplies. Considerable work was also done on developing facilities for the fronts and armies in the Budarino-Mikhaylovka-Kachalino; Petrov Val-Ilovlya; and Vladimirovka-Leninsk-Paromnaya loading-unloading areas.

In connection with incessant enemy airstrikes on rail centers, yards, bridges and trains running between stations, particular attention was devoted to organization of technical support for rail facilities. The principal rail arteries of the Stalingrad and Southeastern fronts were provided with front railway brigades. Repair subunits were deployed not only around major rail facilities but also along the tracks along the line. Stockpiles of repair materials, requisite equipment and tools were placed at dispersed locations. With this organization, time required to move repair crews out to a work site was reduced to a minimum.

Thanks to comprehensive measures to increase the traffic capacity of rail arteries, construction of new lines, and reliable maintenance and support services, soon the capabilities of the rail network in the Stalingrad area were increased by a factor of 1.5, and rail traffic was dependably supplying the needs of the three fronts.

Intensive work was also being done on water transport routes. Heavy enemy bombing of docks, ports, and vessels, and mining of the Volga from Saratov to Astrakhan required additional measures to disperse docking facilities, camouflage and concealment, strengthening of air defense, and waterway mine-sweeping. Hundreds of observation posts were placed on the banks of the Volga, which maintained watch on the river surface day and night and kept watch for enemy aircraft. Dozens of launches and other vessels of the Volga Naval Flotilla swept channels for mines around the clock. Antiaircraft defense of docks, moorings and docked vessels was greatly beefed up. All principal front and army crossing sites were provided with fighter air cover. These measures greatly increased the stability of river fleet operations.

The rear services of the fronts devoted close attention to organization of road support services. Poor development of the road network, a lack of hard-surface roads, regular enemy air attacks, impassable mud during the fall season of bad roads and heavy snowdrifts in winter greatly complicated the job of making military roads (VAD) ready for operations. The combat troops' need for roads was considerable. Traffic on the operational axes of the main forces of the fronts was running 2500-3000 vehicles per day, and along some stretches (Log-Kachalino-Kalach; Verkhniy Baskunchak-Vladimirovka-Kapustin Yar) -- 4500-5000 vehicles per day. As a rule each front would prepare two VAD for operation, and each army would ready one or two. The average length of front VAD ran 350-400 km, and army VAD -- 120-150 km. In addition to front and army VAD, three Hq SHC VAD were operating in the zones of Don and Stalingrad fronts: Urbakh-Astrakhan, Gurev-Astrakhan, Saratov-Kamyshin-Rakhinka.

In order to reduce vehicle losses from enemy air attack on military roads, ramps would be prepared, slit trenches would be dug for personnel, and shelters

for vehicles. Separated traffic movement was set up in a number of populated localities and on particularly heavy-traffic stretches. Road junctions, major bridges, river crossings and other important targets were provided antiaircraft artillery and fighter protection.

One can judge the volume of accomplished road construction in the example of the Stalingrad Front, the road maintenance troops of which moved 32,503 cubic meters of earth, graded 311 km of traveled way, cleaned out 153 km of roadside ditches, repaired and reinforced 67 bridges and culverts totaling 1007 linear meters. There were as many as 25-30 tractors standing by around the clock on the Elton-Zhitkur-Leninsk section to keep vehicles moving during the muddy season.¹¹

A characteristic feature of road support was direct participation by front and army road maintenance units in ensuring stable operations on the Volga crossings. Working in cooperation with engineer troops, road maintenance units of the Stalingrad and Don fronts assembled floating bridges, built docking platforms, ferry slips, approach roads and ramps, performed camouflage and concealment measures, and regularly adjusted docking platforms to changes in river level. The local population was extensively enlisted to work on military roads in all fronts. In the Don Front, for example, the Antipovka-Gornyy Balakley-Gornaya Proleyka-Dubovka road (approximately 120 km) was maintained in its entirety with the manpower and resources of local transport organizations and the civilian population.

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF CONTROL OF OPERATIONAL REAR SERVICES. The new structure of Red Army rear services control agencies established in 1941 withstood the harsh test of the Battle of Stalingrad and fostered firm, centralized direction of logistic support of the combat troops at all stages of combat operations. The deputy commanders in charge of the front and army rear services, logistic support staffs and services worked in close contact with commanding generals and combined-arms headquarters staffs, received initial operational data in a prompt and timely manner, responded flexibly to situation changes, swiftly prepared for and executed maneuver of manpower and facilities, and gave requisite assistance to the troops. All this promoted uninterrupted supply to the fighting forces.

In the defensive period tasks were assigned to the troops, rear services combined units, units and establishments by written instructions (orders) and by technical means of communication. During preparations for the offensive, rear services control was handled by means of personal contact between superiors and subordinates. All instructions were communicated in person, and missions were assigned only verbally. No written or graphic documents were prepared pertaining to rear services support of combat troops in the forthcoming offensive. Transmissions or conversations by technical means of communication were absolutely prohibited. All measures pertaining to maneuver of rear services personnel and facilities, stockpiling supplies, preparing roads, and organizing transport of supplies were conducted under the guise of improving defense and preparing combat troops and rear services for winter. This helped maintain secrecy and gain the element of total surprise for the counteroffensive.

In order to improve efficiency of management, rear services headquarters regularly sent liaison officers to the combat units. The practice of designating command groups was extensively followed in the fronts and armies in order to improve management and control of rear services in individual sectors, as well as to direct crossing operations and other important rear services support facilities (sections). Experience demonstrated that it was essential to place suitable rear services manpower and equipment at the disposal of command groups and to provide them with transportation and reliable communications. Only under these conditions were they able successfully to carry out their assigned tasks.

Commanding generals, military councils, and headquarters staffs of the fronts and armies continuously kept a close watch to ensure that the combat troops were adequately supplied and that rear services were operating properly, assisting rear services agencies on a daily basis, and assigning additional manpower and equipment when the situation required it.

* * *

The experience of the fighting at Stalingrad once again convincingly demonstrated that the success of large-scale strategic operations is closely dependent on stable and uninterrupted rear services operations, and particularly on promptness in supplying combat troops with weapons, ammunition, fuel, and rations. Considerable practical experience was acquired in the area of concealed large-scale rear services preparations for an offensive, in execution of flexible maneuver of rear services personnel and facilities, in advance stockpiling of supplies, organization of hauling of supplies with combined utilization of all modes of transportation, transportation support in conditions of massive hostile air attacks, organization of movement of supplies across a major river, and uninterrupted supply of front battle groups during a swift advance.

The acquired experience in rear services support was taken into account in guideline documents and helped improve the organizational structure of the rear services, the forms and modes of rear services activities. It was extensively utilized in subsequent operations of the Great Patriotic War. The experience gained in rear services support of combat troops in the Battle of Stalingrad has maintained its significance up to the present day.

FOOTNOTES

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Fund 243, List 9762, File 8, sheets 21, 27.
2. TsAMO, Fund 220, List 5836, File 2, Sheet 74.
3. TsAMO, *ibid.*, sheets 53-56.
4. TsAMO, Fund 407, List 20185, File 1, sheets 70-77; Fund 331, List 9762, File 18, sheets 73-78.

5. "Stalingradskaya epopeya" [The Epic of Stalingrad], Moscow, Nauka, 1968, pp 368, 369.
6. "Voyennyye soobshcheniya za 50 let" [50 Years of Military Transport Communications], Voenizdat, 1967, page 66.
7. Z. A. Shashkov, "Rechniki v boyakh za Rodinu" [Rivermen in Battles for the Homeland], Moscow, Znaniye, 1975, page 70.
8. TsAMO, Fund 228, List 505, File 12, Sheet 6.
9. TsAMO, Fund 331, List 370662, File 1, sheets 58-60.
10. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 11, 1974, page 38.
11. TsAMO, Fund 407, List 20185, File 1, sheets 83-85.

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PERCEPTIONS, VIEWS, COMMENTS

BOOK ON WESTERN VIEWS OF WORLD WAR II REVIEWED

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[Article, published under the heading "Criticism and Bibliography," by Doctor of Historical Sciences O. Rzheshhevskiy: "Pertinent Work"]

[Text] The history of World War II and its principal component part, the Great Patriotic War, is a battle front on which a fierce ideological struggle is in progress. Reactionary historians are seeking to whitewash fascism in every way possible, to beg the question of the culpability of imperialism in preparing for and unleashing the war, and to dump onto the USSR responsibility for the war. Analyzing the course of the war, they ascribe to the United States and Great Britain the most uncharacteristic role of "architects of victory," for the purpose of disparaging the decisive contribution of the USSR toward defeat of the fascist-militarist bloc, and falsify the results and lessons of the war in order to "reinforce" the lying myth of a "Soviet military threat" and to justify the arms race on which the United States and its NATO allies have embarked. "The imperialists and their accomplices," stated CPSU Central Committee General Secretary Comrade L. I. Brezhnev in the Central Committee Report to the 26th CPSU Congress, "are systematically conducting a hostile campaign against the socialist countries.... They are operating against the socialist countries in an increasingly more sophisticated and crafty manner."¹

Exposure of bourgeois falsifiers of the history of the Great Patriotic War is one of the most important tasks of Soviet historians. One should bear in mind thereby that in recent years falsification of the events of the past war by Western bourgeois historians has become increasingly more dangerous and sophisticated. They are using references to the experience of the past in order to justify the aggressive and adventuristic policy of U.S. reactionary forces, led by the Reagan Administration and U.S. NATO bloc allies.

A work written by Candidate of Historical Sciences Col A. S. Yakushevskiy² constitutes an appreciable contribution toward exposing the interrelationships between bourgeois historiography of the Great Patriotic War and the present policies and ideology of imperialism. The author notes that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of publications in the West which deliberately distort the role and place of the Soviet-German front in World War II. This is characteristic particularly of such books as "The Unknown War"

by H. Salisbury (USA), "War on the Eastern Front" by J. Lucas (England), "Operation Barbarossa," by A. (Ber) (FRG) and others (pp 6-7). The author notes that their content does not attest to any significant change in the anti-Soviet notions characteristic of bourgeois historiography of the Great Patriotic War. By and large they remain unchanged and are characterized by a prejudiced approach to presentation of the foreign and domestic policy of the Soviet State on the eve of and during the war, by disparagement of Soviet art of warfare, by ignoring of the heroism of Soviet citizens on the battle front and on the home front, and by ignoring or distorting the role of the Communist Party and Soviet Government in mobilizing the entire people for the struggle against the fascist invaders, organization of a war economy, and leadership of the armed struggle.

In discussing these issues bourgeois historians are guided by purely utilitarian considerations of anticomunism and make no effort to recreate a true picture of the Great Patriotic War. A typical example of this is a tendentious interpretation of the course of military operations on the Soviet-German front, where the reader's attention is deliberately focused on the isolated setbacks of the Soviet forces, while their many successful operations are mentioned only in passing and sometimes totally ignored. Only three major battles -- at Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kursk -- have been given somewhat more extensive treatment in bourgeois historiography. At the same time the falsifiers bury in oblivion such outstanding Soviet offensive operations as the Belorussian, Lvov-Sandomierz, Iasi-Kishinev, and many others (page 8). The author correctly notes that in contemporary bourgeois historiography the main emphasis is placed not only on objective treatment of historical facts and events but rather on seeking new techniques and methods of falsifying history. This is particularly characteristic of a book by West German historian (Ya. Pikalkivich) entitled "Stalingrad, Anatomy of a Battle," and a book by British historian D. Irving entitled "Hitler's War."

The author justifiably focuses considerable attention on debunking the thesis, which is widely encountered in reactionary literature, that in 1939-1941 the Soviet Union was pursuing an "expansionist policy" and was "threatening" neighboring countries, including Germany. These false allegations, the author emphasizes, are connected with a new round in the arms race initiated by aggressive imperialist circles. Whenever they wish to justify aggressive plans or obtain additional appropriations for war preparations, reactionary historians assiduously foster the kindling of a noisy anti-Soviet campaign with their fabrications about USSR foreign policy on the eve of the last war (page 26).

An important section of this book is devoted to exposing reactionary falsifications of the liberation mission of the Soviet Union in World War II. The author shows that the international exploit of the Soviet Army brought it fame as a liberation army freeing enslaved peoples. The USSR Armed Forces fully or partially liberated the territories of 13 countries in Europe and Asia, with a population of approximately 200 million. Soviet Army casualties in liberating these countries exceeded 3 million men. "Whoever experienced World War II and took part in the antifascist struggle," stated Comrade G. Husak, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, "will never forget the exceptional role played by the Soviet Union in the battle for the freedom of peoples, its sacrifices and the heroism of its people and army."³

This book is distinguished by clarity of statement, a certain freshness of material, and well-presented exposure of socialism-hostile ideological sabotage and juggling of historical facts.

At the same time we should also mention a few critical comments. In our opinion the author could have more clearly presented the process of crisis in the development of bourgeois historiography. The growing authority and influence of Soviet works on the Great Patriotic War and affirmation of historical truth throw confusion into the ranks of bourgeois falsifiers. This results in the appearance of repetitious writings, contradictory interpretations of identical events, and mutually excluding judgments, which confuse not only the general reader but also the inadequately experienced scholar.

At the same time the conclusion is suggested that the achievements of Marxist-Leninist science in investigating the experience of the past war and in scientific critique of bourgeois, reformist and other trends have built a theoretical and factological foundation for preparing a solid study entitled "Historiography of World War II," the need for which is felt very acutely not only by specialists in history but also by all workers on the ideological front, as well as by the general reader interested in the problems of military history.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Materialy XXVI s"yezda KPSS" [Proceedings of the 26th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1981, page 9.
2. A. S. Yakushevskiy, "Pravde vopreki. Protiv fal'sifikatsii istorii Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny (na russkom i angliyskom yazykakh)" [Contrary to the Truth. Against Falsification of the History of the Great Patriotic War (in Russian and English)], Kiev, Izd-vo Politicheskoy Literatury Ukrainskoy, 1981, 148 pages.
3. "Mezhdynarodnoye Soveshchaniye kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partiyy. Dokumenty i materialy. Moskva, 5-17 iyulya 1969 g." [International Conference of Communist and Worker Parties. Documents and Materials. Moscow, 5-17 July 1969], Moscow, Politizdat, 1969, pp 180-181.

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